

Nature Speaks

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM



NATURE SPEAKS

MEDIEVAL LITERATURE AND
ARISTOTELIAN PHILOSOPHY



Kellie Robertson



NATURE SPEAKS

MEDIEVAL LITERATURE AND
ARISTOTELIAN PHILOSOPHY



Kellie Robertson

Nature Speaks

THE MIDDLE AGES SERIES

Ruth Mazo Karras, Series Editor
Edward Peters, Founding Editor

A complete list of books in the series is available from the publisher.

NATURE SPEAKS



MEDIEVAL LITERATURE AND ARISTOTELIAN PHILOSOPHY



KELLIE ROBERTSON

PENN

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS
PHILADELPHIA

Copyright © 2017 University of Pennsylvania Press

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations used for purposes of review or scholarly citation, none of this book may be reproduced in any form by any means without written permission from the publisher.

Published by
University of Pennsylvania Press
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104-4112
www.upenn.edu/pennpress

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

A Cataloging-in-Publication record is available from the Library of Congress
ISBN 978-0-8122-4865-4

Omne quod movetur ab alio movetur.

For Mike and Silas,
first and finest movers

CONTENTS

A NOTE ON CITATIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

INTRODUCTION

denoted natural rather than moral philosophy. I trace how a certain strain of vernacular literary production responded to the shifting fortunes of Aristotle's scientific writings, writings that formed the core of the arts curriculum from the thirteenth century forward. While these writings were central to university education, parts of these texts were viewed with suspicion and were repeatedly condemned by ecclesiastical authorities who discouraged discussion of their potentially controversial contents. Such censure did not prevent either clerics or poets from arguing over nature's proper authority in popular writings. By showing philosophy's reach, this book offers a corrective to the critical tendency to treat a recognizably courtly poet such as Chaucer in isolation from that other Chaucer, well known to his early readers as the author of the *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, a text whose numerous fifteenth-century manuscript witnesses are second only to those of the *Canterbury Tales*.¹ Another example of this shared context would be the incendiary conjuncture of love and physics that gives rise to many Chaucerian dream visions, including the *House of Fame* and the *Parliament of Fowls*. While counterintuitive to modern readers, this affinity makes sense in the context of one of the most significant events in the history of medieval science: the Parisian Condemnation of 1277. This condemnation prohibited discussion of certain philosophical and theological tenets within the arts faculty, a prohibition driven in part by hostility toward those aspects of Aristotelian science that were seen to promote rationalism at the expense of revelation. This same document also condemned Andreas Capellanus's *De amore*, a treatise that brought natural reason to bear on the arts of love and that influenced vernacular poets from Jean de Meun to Chaucer and beyond. While no single influence can explain the variety of genres and styles in which a poet such as Chaucer wrote, the extent of his dependence on university scientific learning, long marginal to the main currents of Chaucer criticism, has only recently begun to be more precisely formulated and more fully understood.²

In identifying how a set of scientific debates affected aesthetic practice, this book's methodology identifies several topics that have not previously been explored together as central to the literary history of late medieval Britain. These topics include: the difficulty of defining the autonomy of material and natural causes in a providential world; the transmission of *scientia* from East to West with its attendant danger of pagan "contamination"; and the relation of learned university philosophy to its more popular forms. Each of these subjects involves questions of mimesis and representation that were caught up in the controversy over the extent to which truths about the natural world could ever lead one to spiritual truths. Repeated skirmishes over Aristotle's science pitted an increasingly rationalistic natural philosophy against an orthodox theology suspicious of applying physical reasoning to metaphysical questions. This book argues that the controversial reception of this science fundamentally changed the

kinds of poetic accounts of the world that could be offered in its wake.

Alongside the vernacular poetry of Jean de Meun, Guillaume de Deguileville, Geoffrey Chaucer, and John Lydgate, my analysis takes up texts that move conspicuously, perhaps even promiscuously, among Latin and the vernaculars of late medieval Britain. They include: encyclopedias such as the *Imago mundi* (*Image du monde*) and *De proprietatibus rerum* (*On the Properties of Things*); classical *vitae* of pagan philosophers such as those collected in the *Dits moraulx des philosophes*; popular scientific treatises such as the *Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy* that derived, however distantly, from Aristotle's *libri naturales*; spuria such as *De pomo sive de morte Aristotilis* (*The Apple or Aristotle's Death*) that nonetheless were read alongside those Aristotelian texts that made up the arts curriculum; and ecclesiastic polemic that argued over the viability of applying natural philosophical principles to sacred texts or sacramental culture.

This story of intermixed genres and audiences is a late medieval one, for it was in this period that nature began to speak in the two distinct voices that we still hear today: a "transcendent" one, associated with Neoplatonic and Augustinian writers who saw nature as inscrutable and to varying degrees detached from the human world, and an "immanent" one, associated with Aristotelian and Thomist writers who believed that the regular teleological processes observable in nature could not only reveal aspects of the divine plan but also teach us something about ourselves. The Romantic embrace of the sublime—that mix of awe and terror in the face of nature's otherness—is an obvious heir of the transcendent vision; Darwinism—with sexual reproduction replacing God as final cause—is imagined by some historians of science to be a latter-day version of the immanent model. Returning to medieval models of nature provides another vantage point from which to view our present-day confusion about who (if anyone) gets to speak in nature's name. Though plotted along the axes of scholastic culture, vernacular science, and popular allegorical poetry, this book seeks to intervene in current debates over what it is that our society calls upon nature either to license or to disallow.

A return to medieval nature is particularly apposite, moreover, when "posthumanist" critique has cast suspicion on any voice issuing from nature, since that voice has so often been a surrogate for our own. At a time when there is significant skepticism over the humanist project of representing nature, it is important to turn again to the prehumanist past in order to understand as clearly as possible why speaking in nature's voice was imagined as desirable and, in some cases, necessary to both the moral and scientific progress of society. Medieval writers, while generally acknowledging human exceptionalism, actively questioned the boundaries of the human with respect to other categories of being, a set of boundaries most often contested in discussions of will and inclination. The frameworks of those discussions, so foreign in many ways to our own, shed light on the

assumptions of modern critics who, in doing away with all forms of ontological hierarchy, are left with the difficulty of explaining regular processes of growth and change that a pre-experimental science had explained through Aristotelian concepts of teleology and taxonomy. Like their counterparts in today's debates, medieval philosophers also imagined the human as intimately connected to the nonhuman world. By examining the nature of these connections, we clarify the governing terms under which we and our medieval predecessors have been willing to "hear" nature speak, even if today we prefer analogies of networks and rhizomes to the ladders and mirrors favored by the thinkers of the Middle Ages. In this introduction, I lay out the terms of engagement whereby love and physics meet in the medieval period, investigating several terms pivotal in both popular and learned discussions of nature, including "philosophy," "experience," "authority," and "inclination." In order to outline this shared vocabulary as well as the areas of concern common to both natural philosophy and poetry, I will consider a few representative moments in which the larger cultural forces that I study are seen to act in explicit ways.

"Philosophie": Popular Literature and Academic Natural Philosophy

C. S. Lewis's influential and magisterial book *The Discarded Image* asks why it was that medieval writers so often added extended disquisitions on the natural world to works that were ostensibly about something else altogether: the discussion of bad weather and rainbows in the *Roman de la Rose*, the description of planetary influence in Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*, or the recitation of animal lore in the *Kingis Quair*.³ In several elegant and concise chapters, Lewis outlines the types of natural knowledge that medieval writers regularly availed themselves of: classical dream theory; the cosmological models of the Chartrian Neoplatonists; Boethian understandings of providence; bestiaries and lapidaries; Aristotelian accounts of the partitive soul and the body in which it was housed; and the academic framework of the seven liberal arts, which attempted to stitch together these disparate *scientiae*. Such knowledge is imagined as the "backcloth" to most medieval literature, and Lewis designates it simply as "the Model" throughout the book. On Lewis's account, the Model is an integrated *Weltbild* constructed out of pagan and Christian sources all subordinated to a theological framework wherein each part of the cosmos is imagined in relation to its place in the divine plan. The scaffolding of this Model is composed of sources ranging from the *Somnium Scipionis*, Statius, and Macrobius to Augustine, Boethius, and Albertus Magnus.

From the outset, Lewis anticipates a reader who is skeptical of the extent

to which academic science could influence popular poetry; such a reader may be given to ask: "But how far down the intellectual scale did this Model of yours penetrate? Are you not offering as background for literature things which were really known only to a few experts?" (20). While Lewis argues that this influence was manifestly evident on popular writers, by the book's end, he is still asking whether these ubiquitous scientific passages constitute "digressions" and, if not, what possible explanation could be offered for them. In describing the frequency with which such passages appear, Lewis wryly observes: "One gets the impression that medieval people, like Professor Tolkien's Hobbits, enjoyed books which told them what they already knew" (200). All pleasantries aside, Lewis concludes, in a moving and eloquent passage, that medieval writers included such descriptive passages because they were enamored of the ways in which the world around them reflected the grand design and harmonized with their own sense of moral well-being:

The Model universe of our ancestors had a built-in significance. And that in two senses; as having "significant form" (it is an admirable design) and as a manifestation of the wisdom and goodness that created it. There was no question of waking it into beauty or life.... The achieved perfection was already there. The only difficulty was to make an adequate response.

This, if accepted, will perhaps go far to explain some characteristics of medieval literature. (204)

Lewis's description does persuasively explain why such scientific passages appear in certain theological writings, particularly those associated with the Neoplatonism of the Victorines and Chartrians. It is less useful, however, in the case of Dante or Chaucer, writers whose works, while blending extended description of the natural world with more orthodox religious sentiment, nevertheless point to the irregular patches in the admirable design. Nor does Lewis explain the diversity of textual practices that we find in writers who attempt to position the natural world in relation to human reason. Lewis's conclusion about the harmony of the human and cosmic expresses his assumptions, stated at the book's opening, about the relation that obtains between science and literature:

The Middle Ages, like most ages, were full of change and controversy. Schools of thought rose, contended, and fell. My account of what I call the Medieval Model ignores all this: ignores even the great change from a predominantly Platonic to a predominantly Aristotelian outlook and the direct conflict between Nominalists and Realists. It does so because these things, however important for the historian of thought,

have hardly any effect on the literary level. The Model, as regards those elements in it which poets and artists could utilise, remained stable. (13)

This passage limits contact between academic and extra-academic textual communities, and would thus have likely appealed to that skeptical reader Lewis imagines elsewhere. The rest of the book is predicated on the two important claims outlined in this passage. First, that the natural world, as understood by poets, remained stable throughout the medieval period. Second, that poets and artists extracted from the Model only useful facts about the natural world, remaining unaware of, or indifferent to, academic debates surrounding the status of such “facts.” By excluding at the outset any arguments over science from his consideration, any “change and controversy,” Lewis unsurprisingly finds consensus in poetic representations of the material world and little influence of academic debates on vernacular poetics.

But when we read medieval poetry alongside natural philosophy, we find different answers to Lewis’s questions. Far from being steadfastly unaffected by academic understandings of the natural world, many medieval poets were conversant with, even fluent in, these debates. Many demonstrated a critical awareness of the theological stakes of these disagreements over how the natural world could potentially signify and expressed this knowledge in their poetry. Scientific passages appear with such frequency and, to a modern reader, in such unexpected places not because there was broad consensus among writers who enjoyed the luxury of reminding readers of “what they already knew,” but because writers frequently disagreed with one another on basic issues about how to represent the world around them and what such representations might mean. Such passages were ubiquitous because the conflict between the transcendent and immanent models of nature was, almost everywhere, a profound one: individual writers needed to make clear their own positions and align themselves with a particular tradition of looking at the natural world.

Physical science was not mere ornament for vernacular poets, but a crucial frame of reference within which they questioned received literary authority and their place in this inherited tradition. Instead of possessing a single stable and homogeneous Model, medieval writers experimented with several competing models, a competition that was attributable, at least in part, to the shift from Neoplatonic understandings of a divinely inspired cosmos to the Aristotelian natural philosophy that was adopted by universities in the thirteenth century. Such competing views of the world roused strong emotions in their respective partisans. And, while there was certainly overlap between these ways of looking at nature, late medieval vernacular poets regularly drew attention to, and moralized, the gaps between them.

It is no coincidence that the twelfth-century “discovery of nature,” to use M.-D. Chenu’s phrase, coincides with the blossoming of integumental allegory in the works of writers such as Bernard Silvestris and Alan of Lille.⁴ Later vernacular poets associated this model of transcendent nature with a particular allegorical practice, a generative intersection that sparked their own experiments with a personified nature. All of these experiments expressed, to varying degrees, skepticism about the viability of this alliance in the wake of the increasing predominance of Aristotelian science. As Kevin Brownlee, Rita Copeland, and others have argued, this innovative use of vernacular allegory can be traced to Jean de Meun’s continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*, a poem that arguably had the most significant impact on the popular writers who followed.⁵ The *Rose*, along with the writers influenced by it, portrayed human desire in the context of an obdurate material world that could not be transcended at all times. They sought to understand how the human will works in such a world, and to what extent the physical domain could be a source of knowledge or even moral legitimacy.

Nature Speaks examines how thirteenth-century scientific controversy contributed to the formation of this philosophical allegorical practice, a practice that sought to model how the human will relates to the material world in which it made its way. The book argues that Aristotelian physics and vernacular poetry could not help but use the same metaphors to make meaning out of the material world, precisely because it was these metaphors that allowed them to compare nonhuman processes to human ones.

Aristotle and his medieval commentators imagined inanimate matter moving according to principles of will and volition that we moderns locate only within consciousness. For Aristotle, a rock thrown into the air returns to the ground on account of a natural motion that always seeks to return to its “home” in the center of the earth (unless otherwise constrained). Just so, an acorn becomes an oak because it is the nature of the seed’s potential matter to strive after its final, actualized form in the mature tree. While nature, according to Aristotle, “does not deliberate,” it does behave in ways uncannily similar to the human world of volitional acts.⁶ The innovation of medieval theologians was to apply the Aristotelian doctrine of natural motion to the human will, a subject about which Aristotle had relatively little to say. According to Aquinas, the human rational appetite naturally loves the good and directs its movements toward this end. In the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas models his idea of the motions of the will on a model of causation taken from Aristotle’s *Physics* 2.2, which discusses sailing as the “end” that governs shipbuilding:

Et cum omne agens agat propter finem, ... principium hujus
motionis est ex fine. Et inde est quod ars ad quam pertinet
finis movet suo imperio artem ad quam pertinet id quod est ad

finem; sicut gubernatoria ars imperat navifactivae, ut in *Physic.* dicitur. Bonum autem in communi, quod habet rationem finis, est objectum voluntatis; et ideo ex hac parte voluntas movet alias potentias animae ad suos actus.

(Since every agent acts on account of an end, ... the motion originates from that. Hence the paramount influence of the end on the means. Our interest in the first fuels our interest in the second; as Aristotle remarks, the art of sailing governs the art of shipbuilding. Now being good in general, has the meaning of being the purpose and the end. It is the will's object. Consequently, in this respect, the will moves the other powers of the soul to their acts.)⁷

Just as the physical construction of the ship is guided by the builder's idea of the ship, so too the moral man's behavior is directed by an idea of the good. The motions of the will and the motions of material things, therefore, both obey similar teleological laws, laws whose implications are argued over in quodlibetal disputes as well as in allegorical dream visions.

This drama of inclination, whether played out in the soul or in the world, was a specifically topological one, where ethics was, in part, a function of place. Yet there was unease over the extent to which natural and human inclinations were either innate or operated according to precisely the same principles. This book argues that a model of inclination governing both people and things was of equal concern to scholastic writers and to vernacular poets such as Jean de Meun, Guillaume de Deguileville, Chaucer, and Lydgate, all of whom demonstrate a manifest interest in what Chaucer calls, in the *House of Fame*, “kyndely enclynynge.” While these writers disagreed about the extent to which inclination controlled physical objects, human dispositions, and spiritual trajectories, they all imagined the traffic between the human and nonhuman worlds as twoway. For these writers, nature's teleological workings made it capable of conveying the same kind of *sentence*, or moral lesson, that poetry could convey. It was this understanding of human-scaled, end-directed movement in nature that would be lost in the early modern period as natural philosophers decried the Aristotelian tendency to discern “desire” in the inanimate world and Renaissance poets began to abandon the personification allegory as the primary tool for explaining the relation of spiritual to material worlds.⁸

In comparison with their modern counterparts, medieval poets and natural philosophers understood the category of nature in largely similar ways and shared a common set of epistemological tools with which they investigated it. As Kathryn L. Lynch argues in her study *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*, “medieval readers would no more have divided poetry from philosophy than they would have made art exclusive of morality.”⁹ For both poets and philosophers, nature was not something that existed “out

there” apart from the human; instead, nature always had to be framed in human terms before it could be seen and assessed. Framing nature involved the careful calibration of present experience against past authority, whether that of Aristotle or of the Bible. Medieval scientific observation was not empirical in the modern sense, as the historian of science Edward Grant reminds us, since Aristotelianism placed a major emphasis on “the commonsense reliance of daily experience” and “more or less unguided observation.”¹⁰ Because this broad category of experience encompassed both observed and unobserved events, or even events impossible to observe, it was quite usual in the fourteenth century for scientific investigation to rely on the thought experiment as well as concrete sensory data. Past authority could be invoked to buttress either type of “observation.” The thought experiment in medieval physics was, according to the historian of philosophy Peter King, primarily a textual interrogation of observed phenomena.¹¹ Jean Buridan argued for his theory of impetus, not on the basis of watching actual rocks being thrown, but by rereading book 4 of Aristotle’s *Physics* and then imagining counterexamples to it. The spinning of a blacksmith’s wheel or a child’s top, Buridan argues, challenges Aristotle’s explanation of violent motion as the result of air rushing in to fill a void left by an accelerating object.

Late medieval poets tested experience in similarly hypothetical, and intertextual, worlds—whether dream visions or frame tales. Such devices, like the natural philosophical thought experiment, allowed them to imagine with, against, or alongside those found in classical *auctores*. Like Aristotelian scientific treatises, vernacular allegorical poetry attempted to explain the observed phenomena of everyday life with recourse to a dialectical tension between “experience” and “authority.” The same dialectical tension found in the works of Roger Bacon and Jean Buridan informs Chaucer’s portrayal of the Wife of Bath, Theseus in the *Knight’s Tale*, and the eagle guide of the *House of Fame*, all characters who balance an understanding of lived life against the authoritative texts that alternately confirm or deny those experiences. Whereas Lewis had assumed a “trickle-down” model of scholastic knowledge into extra-academic writing, a more circulatory model now predominates in medieval literary studies, a model found in work by scholars such as Sarah Kay, Alastair Minnis, and Daniel Heller-Roazen on Jean de Meun, James Simpson on Gower, D. Vance Smith and Katharine Breen on Langland, and Peter Travis on Chaucer.¹² It is this more dynamic model of knowledge production that is discernable in the natural problems that this book traces as they move from academic registers to more popular ones and back again, often showing signs of having been modified by their contact with new ideas in these extra-academic settings.

It is not just changing conceptions of “experience” and “authority” that make it difficult to see the overlapping concerns of academic physics and popular poetry; this connection has also been obscured by the shifting

meaning of the term “philosophy” itself. The Middle English “philosophie” is a false friend in relation to its modern cognate, since its primary medieval meaning was not the study of human mores but “learning in general.” Importantly, its more specialized senses included both natural philosophy and moral philosophy, a breadth of reference no longer available to the Modern English reader.¹³ We see evidence of this broader semantic usage in many different kinds of vernacular texts. In his translation of the encyclopedia *De proprietatibus rerum*, the late fourteenth-century writer John Trevisa observes that the differences among several types of shadow can be explained “by consideracioun of philosophie.” As the usual translation of the Latin *physicam*, or the science pertaining to the material world, the term’s habitual meaning is also reflected in appearances of the Middle English substantive “Philosophris,” a term that translates *Physicorum*, the usual Latin rubric of Aristotle’s *Physics*.¹⁴ This usage occurs outside of specifically scientific texts as well. In his translation of Ralph (or Ranulf) Higden’s universal history, the *Polychronicon*, John Trevisa differentiates between books of “philosophie” on the one hand (by which he means material science) and books of “ethik, þat is the sciens of þewes,” on the other, observing that Aristotle was responsible for many books of both kinds.¹⁵ These divisions were codified in the university arts curriculum that often divided philosophy into natural (earthly things), moral (ethics), and rational (ways of knowing the truth including rhetoric).¹⁶ As the first of the three primary scholastic subdivisions of *philosophia*, natural philosophy included those disciplines that dealt with change and motion in corruptible things: the material world of humans, animals, plants, and minerals as well as events in the sublunary heavens such as storms and earthquakes.¹⁷ Its domain thus encompassed many topics of intense interest to late medieval poets. Unlike modern disciplinary divisions that habitually divide off the world of material physics from that of human ethics, medieval philosophy encompassed the study of both the human and the nonhuman worlds. When a Middle English reader encountered “philosophie” in one of its more specialized senses, its appearance would be just as likely to summon to mind “physics” as it would “moral philosophy,” just as likely to evoke Aristotle’s vast body of scientific works on the material world—including *On the Heavens*, *On Animals*, *On Generation and Corruption*, and *On Meteorology*—as it would the *Nicomachean Ethics* or the *Politics*. This more capacious definition explains, in part, why extended natural philosophical “digressions” appear not just in translations of scientific texts or “encyclopedic” poetry (such as that by Dante, Jean de Meun, or Gower) but in medieval genres where it would appear to be less directly relevant to the topic at hand, such as hagiography, sermon literature, and political treatises.

Reintegrating the scientific study of the natural world into our understanding of philosophy makes these narrative choices more intelligible. At the same time, it suggests another context for reading the well-known

reception of poets such as Chaucer, who were recognized as “philosophical” by their contemporaries. The link that Chaucer discerned between representational debates in “philosophie” and the representational problems faced by poets is acknowledged by some of his earliest readers, including Thomas Usk and Thomas Hoccleve. Usk, the unsuccessful political partisan, clerk for hire, and sometime Boethian *rhetor*, praises Chaucer in his *Testament of Love* as “the noble philosophical poete in Englissh speche.”¹⁸ While “philosophical” in this context could possibly mean just “learned,” this interpretation is less likely given the fact that, next to Chaucer, Usk is the late medieval poet who was arguably most interested in the laws common to both love and physics. This common interest in “philosophie” was evident to early modern readers as well: it is no coincidence that Usk’s *Testament* was attributed to Chaucer throughout the early modern period and that, in early print editions, it always follows the *House of Fame*, possibly Chaucer’s most conspicuous engagement with models of inclination ultimately derived from Aristotle’s science.¹⁹ A few decades after Usk, the poet Hoccleve, bureaucrat and soi-disant protégé of “Maister Chaucer,” would ask of his now deceased predecessor: “Who was hier in philosophie to Aristotle, in our tonge, but thow?” Critics have regularly assumed that “philosophie” here means “moral philosophy.”²⁰ However, given Aristotle’s late medieval reputation as an authority on the material world and Chaucer’s own manifest interest in natural science, it is equally plausible that it is this aspect of Chaucer’s learning to which Hoccleve refers. The praise of Usk and Hoccleve likewise calls to mind Chaucer’s own invocation of “philosophical Strode” at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*, an invocation that seems to function in apposition to that of “moral Gower.”²¹ While the lawyer Ralph Strode may have been personally acquainted with Chaucer through his London administrative posts, he was also a well-known Thomist philosopher and arts master at Oxford, having written about problems of logic and of the will.²² This dedication seems particularly fitting, as *Troilus* takes up the prickly knot of love and necessity that, as I will argue in later chapters, Aristotle had rendered problematic. These moments of philosophical posse making suggest that in addition to the “rhetorical Chaucer,” flower of eloquence, the “sententious Chaucer,” full of proverbs, the “historial Chaucer,” compiler of Trojan history, the poet’s legacy also included the “natural philosophical Chaucer,” a poet with whom modern critics have less frequently engaged.

This semantic discussion is not intended to deny Chaucer’s profound interest in moral philosophy but to recalibrate a tendency to assume that Middle English “philosophie” points us unequivocally toward it in every instance. Neither is it intended to discount the undeniable interchange among rhetoric, moral philosophy, and physics; medieval philosophical writers such as Chaucer are best understood when we understand “philosophy” as pertaining to all three of these areas, while, at the same time, respecting the distinctions that medieval writers themselves drew

among them. Previous studies have documented the substantial influence of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and the *Nicomachean Ethics* on vernacular literature in general (and Chaucer in particular). James Simpson's *Sciences and the Self*, for instance, is a lucidly detailed account of how two very different poets, Alan of Lille and John Gower, imagine the human's cosmic place within broadly didactic frameworks. Both poets participate in a medieval "humanist" politics, with Alan of Lille practicing a more elitist, absolutist version and Gower a more liberal, vernacular one. From the time of Judson Boyce Allen onward, Chaucer's philosophical tendencies have received much critical attention, including two recent, insightful books: Mark Miller's *Philosophical Chaucer* and Jessica Rosenfeld's *Ethics and Enjoyment in Late Medieval Poetry*, both of which, in very different ways, explore how medieval literature responds to Aristotelian ethical norms. Miller, in outlining Chaucer's philosophical ethics, argues persuasively that it is less about affirming or denying the truth of particular approaches to the sovereign good and more about Chaucer's dialectical engagement with normative sexual roles as sites of mediation between individual, performed identities and the social pursuit of public and private pleasures. Jessica Rosenfeld has described the rich influence that the translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* had on vernacular love poetry, arguing that Aristotle's conception of happiness (*eudaimonia*) became a shared ethical problem for scholastic writers and poets alike. *Nature Speaks* shares with these books an interest in how love became a central topic for late medieval poets, recognizing that it did so because passion and volition configured a set of problems concerning the human's place in the natural order. While the studies that I mention pursue alternately a Foucauldian account of science as the art of self-cultivation or a psychoanalytic account of the self as the site of conflicting internal desires, this book seeks to expand this critical conversation by stressing that the medieval conception of the individual self was also shaped by accounts that ascribed agency to entities in the nonhuman world, accounts originating with Aristotle's natural philosophy.

The argument presented here is that Aristotelian science was an equally significant influence on certain medieval poets, who found in natural philosophical texts sources of formal and generic distinction that, in turn, shaped the literary field.²³ I do not claim that medieval natural philosophy stands apart from ethics or that it alone offers a key to understanding medieval poetics. Rather, I argue that, absent an account of the overlapping concerns of physics and moral philosophy, it is difficult to see clearly the outlines of the human will in its medieval form. For Aristotle and scholastic Aristotelians, physics and metaphysics are continuous territories rather than "non-overlapping magisteria": each operates according to analogous teleological principles, is subject to the same modes of explanation, and employs the tools of dialectic and demonstration to investigate visible and invisible phenomena. The relationship between these two *scientiae* was a

subject of much debate in the late medieval period, but in general scholastics acknowledged that, while the disciplines treated the same subject—the being of substances—metaphysics treats being as it inheres in things, while physics treats the mutability and change to which such being is subject. Both physics and metaphysics equally treat the material and the immaterial. The human soul is properly an object of metaphysics but also of physics, since the movements of its faculties—its dispositions, its passions—are a form of *ens mobile*, “mobile being.”²⁴ It should be noted that the designation of metaphysics as “first philosophy” is somewhat misleading to modern readers, however, since the latter, according to Thomas Aquinas, is indispensable to the former and must be studied prior to it. Moral and spiritual thought is made possible only through analogy with sensible things.²⁵ Physics, imagined as encompassing forces of generation and development that were common to the human as well as the nonhuman, to the material as well as the immaterial, was an integral part of scholastic *philosophia*. Since vernacular poets, like their scholastic counterparts, continually questioned whether or not the human was a part of nature or separate from it, a return to “philosophie” that includes scientific ways of understanding the natural world allows us to focus not just on human subjects (the domain of modern moral philosophy) but on the extent to which the physical environment may also have potentially shaped ethics. This was an urgent question for late medieval scholastics and popular writers alike. This urgency becomes less apparent if we emphasize an ethical metaphysics at the expense of a physicalized ethics. It is the project of this book to show the historical and critical benefits of the latter. In doing so, *Nature Speaks* joins an ongoing conversation among medievalists who emphasize ontology alongside, or sometimes in preference to, epistemology, critics such as Sarah Kay, D. Vance Smith, and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen.

Returning to a premodern culture in which “philosophie” meant more than ethics or metaphysics is instructive. Whereas post-Enlightenment ethics are predicated on a break between physical and mental worlds, medieval ethics, by contrast, grew directly out of its physics in a more organic way. Theorists of this break, for example, Bruno Latour and Alasdair MacIntyre, offer different accounts of what was lost when the “premodern” became the “modern.” While the emphases and ideological allegiances of these narratives differ, both thinkers agree that Enlightenment empiricism demands the separation of the human from the nonhuman, ethics from the sciences (including physics).²⁶ But in the pre-Enlightenment culture examined in this book, philosophy is broad enough to render a writer’s physics inseparable from his or her ethics; if there is an ambiguity in one, it can often be resolved by a turn to the other. This philosophical ambidexterity is just as significant for scholastics such as Aquinas, Grosseteste, and Bradwardine as it is for vernacular writers such as Jean de Meun and Chaucer. That these poets leave a philosophical legacy of this scope and

dynamism is a fact that must remain unexplored as long as we impose on them a rather anachronistic, and likely truncated, view of philosophy in the period. When physics rejoins moral philosophy as a partner rather than just a phenomenal handmaiden or a set of quantifiable extensions, we see more clearly how the theories of material substance a society embraces (or chooses to reject) have a profound influence on the narratives that it can use to explain its own cultural—and not just scientific—values to itself.²⁷

In revisiting medieval ideas about how writers represent the natural world, then, this book challenges modern assumptions about what is material, what immaterial; what body, what mind. I demonstrate in the pages that follow an important point about the medieval mixing of love and physics: our difficulty understanding this mixing is due less to the “porousness” between the categories of the human and nonhuman in the premodern age—the argument made by Latour and others attempting to define early modernity—than to the fact that this boundary was policed in different ways and according to different means.

Nature’s Voices

Nowhere are the complexities of this definition of philosophy more evident than in the embodied personification of Nature that would become a staple of both poets and natural philosophers in the late medieval period. Common in classical antiquity was the view that Nature intentionally concealed herself from human sight, because, as Heraclitus says, “Nature loves to hide.” For the Stoic Seneca as well as for later Neoplatonic writers such as Martianus Capella and Macrobius, Nature continued to remain aloof, preferring to veil herself and to hide her secrets from prying human eyes. This mutely mythographic Nature is derived from the physics set out in Plato’s *Timaeus*, where the order and beauty of the cosmos is imagined as the intentional design of a divine craftsman, the Demiurge.²⁸ For late antique writers, “the great secret of nature is thus Nature herself, that is the invisible reason or force, of which the visible world is only the external manifestation.”²⁹ When Nature spoke at all, it was only in riddles.

In contrast to this reticent earlier figure, medieval Nature was decidedly blabby. She spoke in allegorical poetry and in academic treatises, in *sophisma* and in dream visions. She spoke in Latin and, later, in the vernaculars. She spoke as Lady Nature, as Master Aristotle, as well as through a seemingly endless stream of clerkly ventriloquists, some more reliable than others. And almost always Nature’s speech turned to the subject of love. This proclivity can be explained in part by the fact that nature ruled the human as well as the nonhuman realms through those affective bonds described so vividly in Boethius’s *Consolatio philosophiae*. Literary critics have mapped the genealogy of Lady Nature in her role as *pronuba* and *procreatrix*, beginning

with a series of articles by E. C. Knowlton in the 1920s that cataloged her medieval allegorical appearances in the European vernaculars.³⁰ George Economou traces the migration of personified Nature from her Latin origins through the twelfth-century cosmologists to later vernacular writers, charting the shifting relation between natural desire and marriage.³¹ More recently, Barbara Newman has astutely asked: why would medieval writers return to a pagan personification to express complex philosophical ideas to a contemporary Christian audience? Nature, according to Newman, “is a goddess of the normative,” allowing medieval poets to affirm heterosexual desire, but to stand in multiple relations to the warm theological embrace of chastity as superior to married love.³² Newman’s point is an excellent one, and it raises several further questions: How did Nature become a figure for sexual governance? Why was this personified figure taken up in medieval vernacular poetry at the moment that she was, from the late thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries? And, finally, why did she disappear in the early modern period?

To answer these questions, we need to consider the literary genealogy of medieval Lady Nature in the context of the rise of an Aristotelian natural philosophy that sought to expand what could be explained in terms of regular physical processes. The rising authority of Aristotle’s scientific works, perhaps the most defining feature of the thirteenth-century arts curriculum, made sightings of Aristotle the man much more common in late medieval textual culture, both learned and popular. Long before the fourteenth-century allegorist Guillaume de Deguileville portrayed Aristotle as the deputy of personified Nature in his fourteenth-century poem, the *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* (1331; 1355), Aristotle had been imagined as the “rule of nature” in the academic commentary tradition.³³ “Aristotle” later came to name a constellation of ideas in the vernacular about how to read and write about the natural world vis-à-vis the human one; as such, the name marked a philosophical gallimaufry that included Neoplatonic, Stoic, and Boethian ideas about how to understand the place of the human in the material world. This collection of ideas included naturalism, a preference for immanent over transcendent allegory, an iterative relation to past textual authority, and a validation of sensory experience as a useful heuristic for understanding both the visible world and what lay beyond it. All of these ideas were associated with what can loosely be termed an “Aristotelian,” as opposed to “Augustinian,” interpretation of the Book of Nature.³⁴

A further contribution to recent work on medieval allegory, *Nature Speaks* seeks to understand why giving a body and a voice to nature was seen to be both aesthetically useful and ethically necessary for a certain strain of late medieval poetics. As an embodied abstraction—more properly, prosopopoeia—Lady Nature shares much with other allegorical figures such as Lady Philosophy, Reason, and the personifications of virtues such as Charity and Prudence.

These speaking personifications have been the subject of much modern criticism.³⁵ It is a truism that medieval speaking personifications are usually female because most abstract nouns in Latin are feminine; however, this gendering gains added significance because, in Michael Camille's pithy phrase, "females embody, whereas men act."³⁶ Late medieval Nature is a significant exception to this personified passivity, as the studies by Economou and Newman make clear. In his survey of the classical and medieval uses of allegory, Jon Whitman argues that this model of an active Nature appears first in Bernard Silvestris's mid-twelfth century *Cosmographia*, a dynamic allegory that differed from its classical antecedents by blending late antique interpretative paradigms with Christian spiritual models.³⁷ Bernard Silvestris's Natura is part of the major transformation of both medieval allegory and the figure of Nature herself. For the first time, she emerges as a chief Christian symbol who acts as a key to understanding the rest of the poem's allegorical system; she also acts as a stand-in for the narrator himself, particularly for the education that he receives as he attempts to interpret the allegorical landscape he encounters.

This book is concerned primarily with the construction and effects of Nature's voice in late medieval vernacular poetry, an allegorical voice that was unusual in that it could be heard regularly in scientific treatises as well as in popular poetry. From the twelfth century onward, nature, defined as alternately a principle of order or an agent of change, was regularly personified by academic writers. We see this tendency in twelfth-century Chartrian Neoplatonists such as William of Conches, who imagined nature as a quasi-divine cheese maker: "first she produces must, then she drags what is sedimentary and heavy in it to the lowest place [of the vat], whatever is light to the top, and what is in between to the middle place. Similarly, she creates, mixed in milk, four substances [i.e., whey, cream, butter, and cheese], which man afterward skillfully separates with the help of nature."³⁸ We see it in later Aristotelian natural philosophers such as Robert Grosseteste (d. 1253), who observes in an optical treatise that a natural agent works on its object most powerfully when it moves toward it in a straight line, since "nature acts in the briefest possible manner" (*natura operatur breviori modo, quo potest*).³⁹ Not just a static set of laws, Nature is herself a lively actor. Late medieval poets expanded this natural philosophical principle into an active moral agent in the allegorical *visio*. Like other speaking personifications, Nature is a simulated consciousness whose sometimes lengthy monologues, often directed to the narrator, seek to engage the audience in the narrator's ethical dilemma. Even when such allegorical personages are unreliable, as in the case of Jean de Meun's La Vieille or Guillaume de Deguileville's Nature, they still speak from a rhetorically privileged position given the dynamics of direct address.

It is this particular aspect of personified Nature to which this study turns its attention as we consider her major appearances in vernacular poetry. On

a phenomenological level, we might compare Nature's mode of represented allegorical speech to what happens in the modern theater: while the audience is not the direct addressee of the actors on stage, we are nonetheless caught up in the moral urgency of the action due to proximity and presence. It is through a similar pretense of simulated immediacy—the reader or hearer being hailed by the speaking abstraction—that allegorical address excites intentional ethical engagement on the part of the audience. Our own implicit textual presence (self-consciously mediated through the poetic ego) makes us party to the philosophical arguments on display. While modern poststructuralist critics have been critical of such appeals to presence (particularly to voice as a guarantor of presence), medieval poets found the fiction of allegorical presence, along with its accompanying voice, necessary for the ethical ends they wished to pursue.⁴⁰

In thinking through such tendencies, my work follows the lead of Barbara Johnson who has perceptively explored the politics of voice by asking what it means to treat a theory as an animate being. In a series of important books, Johnson argues that “the throwing of voice, the giving of animation” has identifiable material effects.⁴¹ In her essay “Women and Allegory” Johnson explores what happens when an abstraction such as “theory” gets embodied and subsequently impressed into the service of an institution such as the Royal Academy, one whose job it was to teach theory to young artists as they set out to copy a feminized Nature. A female Theory is much like a female Nature insofar as both raise the question of whether the abstraction is found (“out there” in the world) or made (through consensus and “universal opinion”). Allegorized Theory, according to Johnson, is not “a literal representation of a woman” but rather “an enabling figure for the production of male artists.”⁴² As we will see in this book, speaking for medieval Nature enabled male poets and natural philosophers to speak against previous authorities on an array of aesthetic, scientific, and theological issues.

Giving a voice to nature was thus more than a progymnasmatic exercise. If voice is often imagined as an agent of subjectivity—one that stands in metonymically for a self—the voice of medieval Nature is especially complex as it seems to issue from multiple places simultaneously. Nature moves between being an “it”—a set of impersonal, immaterial inclinations that determine the sublunary world—and being a “she”—an autonomous agent capable of sometimes capricious activity. In this ambiguity, we see how the figure of Nature spatializes a particular set of problems around embodiment common to both poetry and natural philosophy. If patristic writers imagined allegory as a mode of mediation between the human and the divine—Gregory the Great had memorably compared allegory to a machine that lifts the soul up to God—so too medieval poets used the figure of Nature to articulate how to close a distance that was imagined to be both spiritual and ontological.⁴³ In lending abstract concepts a concrete form, allegory was a

master trope that seemed to engage in a kind of substantial, formal alchemy. For natural philosophers and theologians, nature similarly came to stand in for a set of concerns over how the material world was potentially shaped by the immaterial forces that governed it and, perhaps most important, for how the physical body stood in relation to the soul that guided it.

Nature makes such problems visible across an array of textual genres, and, in both poetry and physics, personified Nature functions as a site of ontological mediation, a place where material things get converted into immaterial ideas and vice versa. This tropological mutuality stands in contrast to the more common modern model of allegory that often envisions this transformation as a unidirectional, universalizing movement. A transcendentalizing discourse, allegory is often seen to serve not just abstraction but philosophical idealism, to bestow a discursive body on an immaterial concept in order to press it into a regime of signification. On this account, allegorical figures, vehicles for transcendental subjectivity, aid individuals in their quest to overcome what is experienced as a necessary opposition between self and the world around the self, between, in medieval terms, the microcosm and the macrocosm.⁴⁴ Accounts such as these have encouraged literary critics to study the relation of allegory to metaphysics. Attention to the medieval personification of Nature, by contrast, invites us to conceptualize the relation of allegory to physics, a physics that hypothesizes a passable boundary between self and world. As a “spatialized” moral abstraction, Natura was a fitting tropological counterpart to the “placialized” ethics that characterized Aristotelian thought.

This aspect of Nature’s personification—her ability to convert the tangible into the intangible and then convert it back again—may be responsible for her ubiquity in late medieval poetry, as poets came to see her as a particularly useful (or, in some cases, particularly dangerous) topos. If linguistic iterability is the precondition for the legibility of any sign, the reappearance of medieval Lady Nature suggests a need to redefine her poetic powers in relation to changing academic understandings of her philosophical potency. Vernacular poets self-consciously referred back to her earlier incarnations, whether it is Chaucer’s invocation of Alan of Lille’s Nature in the *Parliament of Fowls* or Guillaume de Deguileville’s subtle yet pointed repurposing of Alan’s epithets for Nature in his *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*. Given this genealogy, when allegorized Nature speaks, we must listen not just to what she says but to what she fails to say, since her strategic silences sometimes speak louder than her words.

The Physics of Love

When medieval Nature spoke, it was not always in the personified voice of the *vicaria dei* or even in that of her own deputy, Aristotle. Sometimes it was

in the clerkly voice of the narrator, as in the opening of the “General Prologue” of the *Canterbury Tales* or in the encyclopedic passages of John Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*. Sometimes Nature even spoke through one of her own creatures. Talking animals—another version of prosopopoeia—may strike the modern reader as embarrassing at best or the height of coercive anthropomorphism at worst. Yet medieval poets used these personifications to raise questions about where the human stood in relation to a nonhuman world that was rarely imagined as silent or inert. The animal voice was particularly useful for exploring the problem of human exceptionalism in relation to love and sexual governance: To what extent is the human ruled by the same “prikke,” or natural appetite, that governs the wakeful birds at the opening of the *Canterbury Tales*? The answer to this question lay as much in the domain of physics as it did in the realm of psychology, since these natural inclinations were thought to work on all physical substances in a similar manner. A talking animal is therefore an ideal spokesperson to foreground the problem of what inclinations are truly shared among the various steps of the *scala naturae*. To take just one example, Chaucer’s *House of Fame* (ca. 1380) purports to document how a poet acquires knowledge of love about which to write. Yet the structure of the *House of Fame* seems to undermine the project that it sets in place, jumping from a discussion of, first, the love of Dido for Aeneas, then, the logistics of how sound travels, and, finally, the fickleness of fame with respect to the reception of the classical past. One of the most notoriously perplexing passages in an admittedly perplexing poem is the unexpected appearance of the garrulous eagle guide in the middle of the dream vision, a moment where science is self-consciously vernacularized through the trope of prosopopoeia.

As Chaucer’s most relentless partisan of “experience,” the pedantic eagle of the *House of Fame* serves as perhaps the best vantage point in Chaucer’s canon from which to understand the competing claims of experience and authority that lie at the heart of academic natural philosophical practice and Chaucer’s poetic project. Sent by Jupiter to remedy the poet’s lack of inspiration, the eagle laments that the eponymous narrator “Geoffrey” has run out of poetic *matere*: he has neither

tydynges
Of Loves folk yf they be glade,
Ne of noght elles that God made.
(644–46)

The poem’s announced project then is to give the poet not just news of human passions but also to provide him with information about the rest of the created world, a joining of courtly discourse with physical science that appears in many of Chaucer’s poems. When the giant bird swoops down on the petrified narrator, terror soon gives way to monosyllabic amazement in the face of the eagle’s scholastic exposition of how such “tydynges” travel to

their intended destination, the House of Fame. A stalwart adherent to the exigencies of proof and experience, Chaucer's eagle launches into a lengthy explanation of the basics of Aristotelian sound theory—a monologue over 150 lines long containing many of the natural philosophical buzzwords of the day, including “proof,” “experience,” and “kynde.” Consequently, the narrator finds himself, not another Ganymede swept up to serve Jupiter's pleasure, but rather a university student trapped in a protracted exposition of Aristotelian laws of motion. After explaining how bodies seek their own elemental places on account of natural inclination, the eagle offers an analogy of how sound waves travel by multiplying in the air:

Now herkene wel, for-why I wille
Tellen the a proper skille
And a worthy demonstracion
In myn ymagynacion.
Geffrey, thou wost ryght wel this,
That every kyndely thyng that is
Hath a kyndely stede ther he
May best in hyt conserved be;
Unto which place every thyng
Thorgh his kyndely enclynynge
Moveth for to come to
Whan that hyt is away therfro.
(725–36)

The eagle's phrase “demonstracion in myn imagynacioun” is the Middle English equivalent of the scholastic demonstration *secundum imaginationem*.⁴⁵ The eagle's language here invokes not imagination in its role in faculty psychology, but instead the usual rhetorical formula that introduces the scholastic thought experiment, an alternative version of experience that buttresses the arguments he will later denominate as “proof by experience.” The fourteenth-century rise in the argument *secundum imaginationem* was, according to Edward Grant, directly attributable to late thirteenth-century controversy over Aristotelian science that encouraged natural philosophers and theologians to imagine worlds in which God's absolute power could produce any variety of effects short of a logical contradiction.⁴⁶ The eagle's thought experiment imagines how the *matere* of love reaches the House of Fame by explaining the material science behind it: invisible sound waves act like their visible counterparts, as when a pebble is tossed into water. In the case of broken air, sound rises because it lacks its natural place in the heavens. The eagle's monologue offers a syllogistic understanding of (first) how all things seek their desired places in the physical world in order to understand (next) why sound travels toward the House of Fame in order (finally) for the poet to acquire “tidings” of which he can write. In this scheme, the House of Fame is a place that directs the

movements of both sound as elemental air and the humans who come into contact with it. It functions as a spatialized cause demonstrating the Aristotelian power of place that so interested medieval philosophers and poets alike.⁴⁷

Like the eponymous narrator “Geoffrey,” modern literary critics have often been struck mute by the eagle’s syllogistic reasoning. Some have pigeonholed it as light comic relief—a parody of dry scholastic method; others have seen it as an example of crass empiricism to be condemned.⁴⁸ Yet the eagle’s speech, no matter how long-winded, actually reveals a necessary fact about the narrator’s poetic vocation. In order to get new poetic *matere*, whether of love or anything else, the poet must be schooled as well in how the matter of the created world works. In her foundational reading of this poem, Sheila Delany argues for the importance of the eagle’s lecture as evidence of an early stage in the narrator’s progression from a reliance on merely empirical knowledge (“experience”) to a “leap of faith” that lets him ascend to more divine ways of knowing. On this view, Geoffrey’s initial skepticism is shown to be “fideistic,” since, in the final accounting, the poem is written “al for our doctrine” as Chaucer’s Nun’s Priest (echoing Paul) puts it.⁴⁹ In this scheme, the eagle represents the “limits of science” that the narrator must transcend. The context of the eagle’s speech on sound has been most thoroughly considered by Martin Irvine, who finds similarities between it and Stoic grammatical theory, particularly commentaries on Priscian that discuss *vox*.⁵⁰ While grammatical theory is one possible source for discussions of voice, the eagle’s “proof by experience” could also have been taken directly from Thomas Aquinas’s well-known and widely circulated commentary on Aristotle’s *De anima*, wherein he treats sound theory in general and voice in particular. Sometimes following Aristotle, sometimes following other commentators such as Boethius, Aquinas rehearses the argument that sound is generated by striking air (the eagle’s assertion that “soun ys noght but eyr ybroken,” 765) and includes the example of the stone thrown into water as an illustration of the multiplication of sound.⁵¹ Whichever source or sources Chaucer may have drawn upon, none would likely have included what seem to be characteristically Chaucerian additions: that even tiny sounds such as those “piped of a mous” (785) would be subject to such multiplication or that these multiplying circles would begin only the size of a pot lid (“covercle”) before widening from shore to shore. It is also important to emphasize that the eagle’s speech has thematic and stylistic affinities with the extra-academic dissemination of scientific knowledge found in texts such as the anonymous fourteenth-century *Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy*, a sometimes convoluted attempt to reconcile physical and cosmic influences with human volition, and Évrart de Conty’s early fifteenth-century *Le livre des Eschez amoureux moralisés*, a poetic commentary that includes, among its abundance of natural philosophical material, a long discussion of the

properties of place and natural motion.⁵² While we may not assign Chaucer's source with absolute certainty, such a domestication of his scholastic material would certainly be humorous to his contemporary audience. What is also clear is that a learned audience would recognize this argument as one taken from a written commentary tradition—a "proof by experience" penned from the *auctorite* of old books rather than from the eagle's own personal experience.

The question remains, however: why did Chaucer plunk down a university physics lesson at this particular point in the middle of a poem ostensibly about love, reputation, and the transmission of both through time? Like previous critics such as Delany and Irvine, I understand the eagle's lecture to be concerned with the vagaries of knowledge production itself, an interest shared by scholastic culture and popular literature alike. In focusing on Aristotelian natural philosophy instead of skepticism or rhetoric, however, I shift the poem's center of philosophical gravity by arguing that epistemological concerns are shown to be the result of ontological ones. The eagle's speech looks both backward and forward to the wider problem of how "kyndely enclynynge" may potentially operate or fail to operate in the human world, a set of ideas that are tested out in the rest of the poem. The *House of Fame* is often considered by critics to be a series of narrative non sequiturs: the first book rehearses the story of Dido and Aeneas from Virgil and Ovid; the second is primarily taken up with the eagle's physics lesson and the narrator's flight to the House of Fame; while the final book describes Fame's unnatural palace and its inhabitants, including many of Chaucer's most significant classical sources. The reader can easily succumb to a case of literary whiplash due to the constant change of venue.

Despite the seeming disparateness of subject matter, it is the idea of inclination, in the guise of necessity and contingency, that gets tested in each of the three books. By apposition, we are invited to reframe retrospectively the love story of the first book: To what extent is Dido's inclination to love Aeneas predetermined? Aeneas's to leave her? The narrator makes conflicting statements about these dispositions to love. Following his classical sources, the narrator shows us how the actions of both Dido and Aeneas result from Venus's intervention in her son's destiny. If this is the case, how can Dido be blamed by the narrator as a woman who "loved al to sone a gest" (288), who "doth amys / To love hym that unknowen ys" (269–70)? How can Aeneas be condemned as "unkyndely" (295)? The unreliability of the narrator takes a particular form here that we might term "narrative voluntarism"; the narrator asserts that the decisions both to love and to leave were acts of free will, even in the face of classical accounts which show them to be predetermined. Book 1 is less about two incompatible truths—Dido's versus Aeneas's—than it is about the narrator's insistence that both characters possess full agency even as they

simultaneously act in accordance with “kynde” (280) and at the behest of the gods (240–44; 427–32).

In scholastic thought, it was *inclinatio* that was seen to link the appetites of matter with the appetites of men. Inclination had always been a special power for Aristotle: it was the “ability to be moved” that inheres in elemental matter and hence in all bodies formed out of them (including the human). In his discussion in *De caelo* 4.1 of why light elements such as air ascend and heavy elements such as earth descend, he defines inclination as “the power of being moved naturally in a certain way.” Inclination is therefore indispensable for understanding nature more generally because “the inquiry into nature is concerned with movement and these things [i.e., all elemental bodies] have in themselves some spark (as it were) of movement.”⁵³ At its most basic level, this is the framework in which the eagle’s discussion of the “kyndely enclynynge” of sound as broken air in the *House of Fame* should be understood. Moreover, this “ability to be moved” posed several related questions for medieval scholastics: Is inclination the same in humans as in the rest of the nonhuman world? What appetites could potentially incline the will? Is the will itself an inclination? Or does it possess inclinations? As we have seen, the theories of inclination introduced briefly in the *Physics* and more fully in *De caelo* would also appear in medieval theological works theorizing the will. In his *Summa theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas argued that, in all appetites, love was what moved the subject toward its object or end. As a type of mover, love operates in both the physical and the metaphysical realms:

Now in each one of these appetites, the name love is given to the principle of movement towards the end loved. In the natural appetite the principle of this movement is the appetitive subject’s connaturalness [*connaturalitas*] with the thing to which it tends, and may be called natural love [*amor naturalis*]: thus the connaturalness of a heavy body for the centre is by reason of its weight and may be called natural love. In like manner the aptitude of the sensitive appetite of the will to some good, that is to say, its very complacency in good, is called sensitive love, or intellectual or rational love [*amor sensitivus, vel intellectivus, seu rationalis*].⁵⁴

As Paul Hoffman observes, this passage suggests that, for Aquinas, humans are affected by both inclinations in the will (or rational appetite) as well as those in the sensitive appetite.⁵⁵ But the implications of this statement are even more radical. Aquinas goes on to say that natural love is not just confined to those things with vegetative souls, “but in all the soul’s powers, and also in all the parts of the body and universally in all things” (sed in omnibus potentiis animae, et etiam in omnibus paribus corporis, et universaliter in omnibus rebus).⁵⁶ Aquinas’s formulation suggests shared

appetitive tendencies among all ontological categories. It shows, succinctly, why inclination was the stage on which medieval writers debated problems of both determinism and human exceptionalism. This passage puts its finger on what is at the heart of the problem of *House of Fame* (and, more generally, the problem of a personified Nature for the writers considered throughout the rest of the book): What do love and physics have to do with each other? To what extent does the *connaturalitas* inherent in persons and things overlap?

The orthodox position was that they do not. The human will is never subject to external influences that may potentially predispose the will to act in a certain way; it operates wholly autonomously. This view was codified in the far-reaching 1277 condemnation that censured, among other tenets of moral and natural philosophy, the Aristotelian view that the human will was potentially subject to outside pressures.⁵⁷ This debate over the will did not end in the late thirteenth century, however; the problem of what may or may not incline the human will was the subject of vigorous debate for fourteenth-century theologians such as Scotus, Ockham, and Bradwardine who continued to argue over whether or not the rational intellect could be influenced by what it perceived around it or by wider cosmic influences that drove nonhuman processes of sublunar growth and change.⁵⁸ Increasingly, the debate centered on the relative autonomy of the will in a world understood to be strafed by vectors of determining forces, whether imagined as elemental, planetary, or humoral. This model of inclination was thought to be dangerous because it potentially vitiated human free will. If the soul moves in just the same way as rocks or broken air, human choice has very little moral purchase. But conversely, if it is completely autonomous, what guarantees its tending toward the good?

The eagle's speech, placed as it is in the center of the poem, acts as a fulcrum between the problematic visions of determinism and contingency in the other two books. The "kyndely enclyning" episode dramatizes the *amor naturalis* of sound seeking its aery home, an episode that is sandwiched between two episodes of *amor intellectivus*. It acts as the hinge between book 1, an episode of pagan determinism misread by the narrator, either through ignorance or willfulness, as a question of the misuse of free will, and book 3, which dramatizes Fame's utter contingency as a purveyor of reputation and the sometimes dubious attempts of classical authors to refashion these ad hoc accounts into stable historical narrative. In the last book, Fame, unconstrained by any necessity whatsoever, is free to assign reputation as fairly or unfairly as she sees fit, resulting in the ethical bedlam that is the *House of Fame*, a world where the links between intention, action, and reputation are shown to be haphazard. "A femynyne creature, / That never formed by Nature / Nas" (1365–67), she is a figure of contingency whose behavior contrasts tellingly with the regular movements of the natural world described at such length by the eagle. Finally, the Trojan writers, Chaucer's

own literary antecedents, are shown to behave in a similarly fickle manner. Their conflicting accounts of the same historical events result in nothing but “a ful confus matere” (1517). Like the musicians sitting outside Fame’s palace, these Trojan writers attempt to mimic experience in words, “as craft countrefeteth kynde” (1213). Chaucer’s poem shows the difficulties of art representing nature and links it with the even more intractable problem of defining a nature that seeks to limit the workings of *amor naturalis* in the human.

As opaque as its structure may seem to us moderns, the *House of Fame*’s appositional form makes clear that the Chaucerian imaginary was one that delighted in interrupting or suspending the usual teleologies. Chaucer loved the “what if” of the scholastic thought experiment: What would happen if Aeneas did not have to leave Dido, if Rome were not founded, if medieval Londoners (including Geoffrey Chaucer) were not subject to its cultural hegemony, living, as they did, in New Troy? And most important for Chaucer, what happens if writers were not subject to the determining inheritance of classical *auctores*? In portraying the human world as utterly contingent and the natural world as utterly regular and rule-bound, Chaucer suggests that to make the two realms mutually exclusive, to see the human as exceptional to “kynde” in all ways, runs the risk of creating moral and historical chaos, even as it seems to offer the promise of appealing freedoms, whether literary or theological.

Some of the questions that most interested Chaucer—the nature of necessity and contingency; the position of the human vis-à-vis the nonhuman; the interaction between spirit and matter—were also being debated within the university at a time when theology and natural philosophy had struggled, and largely failed, to find compatible answers to them. In typically Chaucerian fashion, the *House of Fame* parodies what contemporary scholastics treat in earnest. The eagle’s speech is more than just a science joke that is no longer funny, however. This caricature is embedded in a poem that, like academic traditions of natural philosophy, expresses skepticism about past authority, whether it be the authority of Aristotle and Plato or classical poets such as Virgil and Ovid.

In Chaucer’s poetry more generally, a reflexive belief in free will or its opposite, determinism, is usually shown to be naive. For Chaucer, the interesting questions appear to be: Where is the middle ground? Up to what point can human and nonhuman behaviors be seen as coextensive? To what extent is the “physics of the will” really physical? Chaucer’s poetic engagement with nature and naturalism in the *House of Fame* is not an argument for Chaucer as a skeptic in the sense that he radically doubted the possibility of knowledge or belief (my argument is not a version of the secularization thesis in either its weak or strong forms). Rather, Chaucer’s naturalism suggests that he is one of those medieval authors who, as the philosopher Dominik Perler observes of university writers, could adopt a

skeptical method “by presenting arguments that refute a certain conception of knowledge and attempt to introduce a new one.”⁵⁹ The appositive style of the *House of Fame* is but one example of Chaucer’s skeptical method, a juxtaposition of human and natural models of *inclinatio* that questions how knowledge of the literary past and the physical present are constituted and co-entwined.

No matter what medieval voice nature spoke in, whether personified *magistra*, learned clerk, or chatty bird, the lessons learned from that speech point us toward what physics and fiction shared in the premodern period: that all ethics have a grounding in physics and that what we believe about how the material world functions largely determines what we believe about how humans make their precarious way in the world often aided only by sensory experience and the authority of old books. When Chaucer displaces these questions about free will and determinism back into pagan antiquity—a rhetorical move he repeats throughout his career—he is responding to the aftershocks of the controversy over Aristotelian philosophy that attempted to prescribe the ways in which “experience” and “authority” could be understood and configured. For Chaucer, the past was the laboratory in which he could measure the binding course of natural processes against the apparent spontaneity of human action. The eagle’s speech is therefore not just ornamental scientific allusion, but rather the index of a “climate of opinion,” in Alfred North Whitehead’s phrase, one that shaped Chaucer’s outlook, imbuing problems such as the relation of inclination to free will with urgency while rendering others dull or irrelevant.⁶⁰ As I will argue in succeeding chapters, this climate of opinion was one in which poetry and natural philosophy, physics and fiction, spoke to the same issues, raised similar challenges, and even posed comparable dangers. Natural philosophy and poetry were both places from which writers could analyze the ethical implications of representing the material world and of choosing whether to locate the human either within or outside of it. This is not to suggest that scientific literature was the primary impetus behind the vernacular poetry considered throughout this book. Rather, it is to argue that the ways in which a particular group of poets, all interested in the problem of nature, framed ethical problems was part of a larger cultural movement to question the relative value of terms such as “experience,” “authority,” and “kind.” This questioning happened in formal, dialectical terms in arts faculties, but theirs was not the only domain in which this questioning occurred. The project of this book is thus to analyze this climate of opinion, one that made such a shared enterprise evident to Chaucer’s early readers but that became less legible with the demise of Aristotelian natural philosophy and the changing aesthetic priorities that marked the early modern period, a time when Aristotle came to be identified more readily in the vernacular as the author of the *Rhetoric*, the *Ethics*, and the *Poetics* rather than the *Physics* or the other *libri naturales*.

Plan of the Book

As I have already suggested, the goal of this book is not merely to clarify local representations of nature made by medieval poets (such as Chaucer's avian physicist), or, in a less generous reading, to explain all of the most boring bits of medieval vernacular poetry to modern readers. Neither do I seek a comprehensive account of "medieval nature," for, were such an enterprise feasible, it would surely include, *inter alia*, the Latin and Anglo-Saxon versions of the *Physiologus*, say, or Adelard of Bath's *Quaestiones naturales*. Such texts, written before the full translation of Aristotle's works had transformed the thirteenth-century university, ask very different questions about nature than their later medieval counterparts. In focusing on how medieval poetry allegorized nature from the late thirteenth century to the fifteenth century, this book argues that the rhetorical strategies of these later medieval poets get charged with the polarities of scholastic debate over how the natural environment could potentially signify. Following the most far-reaching censures of Aristotle's science in Paris and Oxford in the 1270s, debates over natural philosophy shaped the authorial subject positions available to writers, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly.

Were this book to undertake the narrower task of examining how nature was represented in late medieval British literature, a reader might reasonably expect to find whole chapters on the *Gawain*-poet, Gower, and Langland, not to mention Robert Henryson and John Metham, writers less well-known today but no less conversant with the language of scholastic science than their predecessors considered here.⁶¹ While there are many narratives about nature in late medieval literature, this book concentrates on the one that issues from Nature's own mouth. I focus on those authors whose poetry self-consciously connects the extended personification of Nature to their own aesthetic projects as well as to academic debates over natural necessity, will, and inclination. In concentrating on four vernacular writers who were all notably popular in England—Jean de Meun, Guillaume de Deguileville, Chaucer, and John Lydgate—the book outlines a genealogy of poets who were not only sensitive to academic debates over the status of material science, but who also wove commentaries on this science into their allegories as a way to speak back to, and at times, intervene in university debates. These poets all engage a specific set of problems, a set that includes: the inclinations inherent in both people and things; the relative value of experience; the charisma of nature; love as a material as well as spiritual force; and conflicting models of natural and theological necessity. While not exhaustive, such topics are, to borrow a term from natural philosophy, the "substantial forms" that mark out these poets as part of a recognizable tradition.

The argument about this tradition offered here is at once literary,

historiographical, and more generally philosophical. At its most fundamental, it asks why this habit of allegorizing nature as a person, whether as Magister Aristotle or Lady Nature, flourishes at this particular time and then traces the fortunes of these personified figures over the course of the late medieval period until their disappearance in the early modern period. It is not a coincidence that the efflorescence of personification allegory coincided with a scientific paradigm that analogized the human and the nonhuman in both its physics and its ethics. In seeking to trace the shifting moral authority of nature over this period, the book shows how these allegories respond to intense and local physicotheological pressures, conflicts between those who saw nature's influence in the realm of the human to be consequential and those who would discount it altogether. In these four poets, we are given discrete snapshots of a diachronic debate at particular places and times, taken at an ever-increasing distance from the twelfth-century "birth of nature" and the tradition of Latin integumental allegory that accompanied it. For these later poets, the place of the human was as central a philosophical problem as it was for the academic writers whom they read. This overlapping set of concerns allows us to view the problem of human exceptionalism from a variety of perspectives and to discern the highly textured nature of these discussions, filled with nuanced ontological distinctions and even more surprising co-species affiliations. It is not just that this popular literature refers us back to a set of scholastic debates that happened elsewhere or earlier (or both). This poetry is not just versified science, a compendium of watered-down academic debates. Rather, the popular and academic debates engage the same basic questions through similar rhetorical strategies. This is why natural philosophy is not just a "context" or "background" for medieval poetry, or in Lewis's phrase, "the Model" against which medieval poets expressed an independent poetic vision. For a certain segment of late medieval writers, how one understood the systemization of the world determined how one could write poetry about it.

This volume is divided into three parts. The first is devoted to how nature and natural philosophy are portrayed across the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as cosmographical models were transformed by translations of Greek science. As the role of Aristotelian learning in the thirteenth-century arts curriculum expanded, scholastics such as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas sought to integrate this "new" science into Christian theology, to accommodate the ostensibly rule-driven laws of nature to sacramental culture. These Aristotelian models of nature did not immediately or decisively replace the Neoplatonic ones prevalent in the preceding century; instead, they came to exist side by side with them. This coexistence produced a "double tropology" of nature that found the same metaphors used to embody contrasting visions of nature. In the Neoplatonic version, physical entities are an emanation of God's selfcontemplation; thus nature is

imagined to be working from a transcendent plan whose reality was always located elsewhere. In the Aristotelian version, on the other hand, nature is a series of immanent causes, a serial process that imagined the Creator's hand at work within the earthly design rather than imposing it from without. In this system, a material thing does not just point abstractly to an absent divine signifier; instead, it is connected to the divine plan through its own program of becoming. The first chapter looks at several twelfth- and thirteenth-century tropes—the ladder, the ax, the book—that were regularly adopted to fit alternately transcendent and immanent views of how nature functioned. These figures were, as we will see, adopted by later medieval writers who used them to frame their own ideas about what kinds of meaning making were possible using the tools of the physical world.

These natural metaphors would come to carry more rhetorical weight as controversy over material science and the concomitant dangers of naturalism escalated. By the last quarter of the thirteenth century, how one read Nature's book, climbed her ladder, or wielded her ax came to serve as a barometer for the fluctuating theological pressures that would culminate in the most wellknown censure of Aristotelian philosophy: in 1277, the bishop of Paris, Étienne Tempier, condemned over two hundred heretical propositions in a document that, among its propositions, censured the determinist dangers associated with so-called radical Aristotelianism, reaffirmed the necessity of divine omnipotence, and mandated a return to a more Augustinian model of an unfettered notion of the human will.⁶² In this atmosphere, biographical representations of Aristotle himself functioned as a conspicuous place from which to speak about the potential compatibility of Greek science and Christian doctrine. This chapter explores how conflicting accounts of Aristotle's death came to be a proxy for debates over the extent to which knowledge of the physical world could serve as an index to spiritual truth. The philosopher's end is described in a surprisingly wide variety of texts, from academic treatises such as the syncretic *De pomo sive de morte Aristotilis* to quodlibetal questions treating the philosopher's potential salvation to his representation in more popular genres such as universal histories, encyclopedias, and vernacular poetry. Surveying this field suggests that views on Aristotle's afterlife often served as a referendum on his natural philosophy.

The book's second part looks at how this controversy shaped the representational politics of two French poets, Jean de Meun and Guillaume de Deguileville, writers whose works would significantly determine what personified Nature would come to look like in late medieval England. This pair of writers establishes a vernacular vocabulary for debating what nature means and a standard for measuring the extent to which allegory can be a useful instrument for expressing that meaning. Read together, their very different portrayals of Lady Nature demonstrate that allegorizing nature was not just an aesthetic response to a previous literary tradition but also an

engagement with contemporary philosophical tensions over inclination and exceptionalism. In his continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*, Jean de Meun depicts Lady Nature as obsessed with the interplay between human free will and natural necessity, a connection that, while not central to his twelfth-century cosmological models, was of pressing consequence in the late thirteenth-century Parisian environment in which Jean wrote. His capricious Lady Nature ventriloquizes the utter autonomy of divine choice and argues that a similar contingency is at work in the human will, a model promoted by orthodox theologians such as Bonaventure and affirmed in Tempier's 1277 condemnation. But if Nature now speaks for the freedom of the human will, who is left to speak for the inexorable laws of nature? Jean's poem explores the logical consequences of this paradox, a philosophical experiment whose disturbing results Jean bequeaths to the vernacular poets who followed him.

Writing a half century later, the Cistercian Guillaume de Deguileville portrays Nature in his *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* as a braying old woman, a stark contrast to the magisterial, if somewhat fickle, Lady Nature of Jean's continuation of the *Rose*. Deguileville's Nature, incapable of understanding her place in the divine order of things, proves to be a source of error rather than enlightenment. Although Deguileville is usually described as a conservative writer whose allegories promote a literary agenda just as orthodox (and unremarkable) as his theological one, [Chapter 4](#) argues that Deguileville's personification of Nature is quite radical: he intentionally departs from previous allegorical archetypes that located (even qualified) moral authority within nature. For Deguileville, nature cannot be a source of moral value in a world truly governed by grace. Having discarded this model of natural mimesis, Deguileville must now outline a new ethical poetics, one that audaciously presents the poet as the mediator whose works ensure a moral continuity between material and immaterial realms, a continuity previously underwritten by Nature herself.

The writings of Jean de Meun and Guillaume de Deguileville, both immensely popular in late medieval England, offer contrasting visions of how a vernacular poet could describe Nature's rule and, consequently, appropriate her authority. The book's third part examines how these ideas about natural necessity influenced English literary culture, first in the works of Geoffrey Chaucer and, a few decades later, in a pair of translations attributed to his self-anointed protégé, John Lydgate. Chaucer's interest in this problem is evident in the two places where he personifies Nature: first, in his early dream vision the *Parliament of Fowls* and, subsequently, in the *Physician's Tale*. These two poems may initially appear to have little in common—one a comic beast fable, the other a pagan exemplum involving child sacrifice—but both poems test out the ambivalent effects of a highly contingent Nature, one who presides over a world ruled by the contrary forces of what Chaucer terms “hap” (destiny) and “eleccioun” (free will) in

the *Parliament of Fowls*. Chapter 5 argues that both Chaucerian poems deploy the terminology of will and physical inclination that, while polarized by the preceding century's condemnations of Aristotelian science, had continued to be used by fourteenth-century theologians even as they began to suspect that too much contingency could be just as dangerous as too little. In the *Parliament of Fowls*, the relaxing of Nature's exigency results in the temporary suspension of sexual reproduction, while in the *Physician's Tale* appeals to natural familial feelings produce a more radical enforcement of chastity, one that issues from imagining divine omnipotence as a model for the freedom of the human will.

Around the same time that Chaucer's eagle guide was advocating for the rule of natural reason in the *House of Fame*, this principle was becoming the object of orthodox theological suspicion in a debate that was to have farreaching religious and literary consequences in fifteenth-century Britain. By the end of the fourteenth century, Wycliffite critiques of sacramental culture were perceived to stem, in part, from Aristotelian rationalist leanings, an overdependence on what came to be called "kyndely reson." As opposed to the situation in France where the translation of Aristotle's scientific treatises had been encouraged (as we see in Nicole Oresme's writings), such large-scale translation of "philosophie" did not occur in England. The English intellectual environment produced not vernacular science but rather mythographic translations that sought to return to earlier allegorical models of nature. Chapter 6 examines two such translations attributed to the Benedictine monk and poet John Lydgate, *Reson and Sensuallyte* (a rendering of the anonymous *Eschéz d'Amours*) and the *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* (a verse version of Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*). Both translations revisit the *Roman de la Rose* and the debates it inspired in order to argue, once again, for the unassailable position of theology over natural philosophy, Diana over Venus. While each translation offers a different hermeneutics of nature, their respective rhetorical strategies suggest that the rationalist stakes were substantially different than they had been when Chaucer was writing just a few decades earlier. In seeking to recover an orthodox model of "kyndely reson," both translations show just how difficult that enterprise was to become once natural reason had become tainted through association with unorthodoxy.

The book concludes by turning to the question of what early modern readers understood when they heard the voice or, rather, voices of medieval Nature. While it is not the case that the Renaissance witnessed "the death of nature" (as some critics have claimed), this period at least marked the silencing of the personified allegory of Nature as a compelling rhetorical device, a figure who has her last great outing in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*.⁶³ Spenser's personification self-consciously rewrites his medieval inheritance, separating off Nature's poetic moral authority from her role as mutable *physis*, that engine of natural cyclical change that was formerly the

domain of medieval natural philosophy. It is no coincidence that this allegorical Nature disappears from poetry even as Aristotelian physics was gradually dismantled over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a time when it becomes progressively more difficult to see the medieval writers discussed here as Aristotle's heirs in "philosophie."

Looking back to a moment where physics and fiction writing were seen as complimentary ways of exploring the natural world, as this book does, allows us to see another consequence of the Renaissance shift away from Aristotle's science. As the Aristotelian drama of inclination gave way to the placeless interaction of mechanical forces and to the *declinatio* or *clinamen*—the swerve described by the newly rediscovered Lucretius—natural motivation migrated from something inherent in bodies to something outside of them.⁶⁴ The consequence for literary history is that we no longer see late medieval vernacular poetry as participating in one of its most important vocations: weighing sources of inclination in a world where neither the human nor the environment held full sway. In jettisoning Aristotle's natural philosophy but keeping the ethics and the moral philosophy that grew out of it, early modernity sealed the border between love and physics, the humanities and the sciences, the moral Chaucer and the natural philosophical Chaucer. On the broadest level, this book allows us to see what was lost—to literature, to science—during the early modern period when Lady Nature and the natural philosophy she emblemized went out of fashion.

PART I

CHAPTER 1

of Greek politics, French Cartesianism, and American parks.”² Latour’s point is not just that nature is representational pastiche, but that it is, more often than not, nostalgic, culturally sedimented pastiche. In order to reimagine medieval views on nature, it is necessary to recreate, *mutans mutandis*, the pastiche from which it too was composed. While it included the legacy of Greek politics, late medieval nature was shaped by a contemporary scholastic argument over how to accommodate the insights of pagan science to Christian revelation, a sometimes vitriolic negotiation that will be described in more detail in the following chapter. In addition to the university politics, perhaps the most fundamental aspect of late medieval nature was its dependence on the rhetorical figures of allegory and analogy. It is hard to argue with Ernst Robert Curtius’s observation that literary representations of natural environments found in medieval writers were not meant to be realistic, since they were shaped by standard conventions that were inherited from theology and late antique rhetoric. According to popular medieval rhetorical manuals such as that of Quintilian, the poetic question “where” gave rise to the Aristotelian *argumentum a locum*. Rules of invention shaped the narration of nature to the extent that place amplifies the affect associated with events that occur there (for example, the idyllic grove or *locus amoenus* as the conventional site for romance).³ When we encounter a description of Love’s garden in the *Roman de la Rose*, for instance, we see individual flowers and trees, but this greenery furnishes an enclosed space that functions as an externalized version of the self, a space where allegorical impulses such as Fair Seeming, Courtesy, and Generosity war with False Seeming, Jealousy, and Foul Mouth. Curtius and Latour would certainly both agree that “there is no there there” in representations of nature, whether classical, medieval, or modern.

If we moderns think of nature in terms of place, of going “out” into nature, medieval writers, by contrast, imagined nature through a series of analogies that usually led back to the self. This reflective habit is perhaps most famously articulated by the twelfth-century Neoplatonist Alan of Lille who asserts that

Omnis mundi creatura,
Quasi liber, et pictura
Nobis est, et speculum

(Every creature of the world is like a book, a picture, and a
mirror for us).⁴

For writers such as Alan, the created world celebrates its maker and, through him, the human created in the divine image. Today, this reflective habit is mourned by environmental critics such as William Cronon, who, in his elegant deconstruction of the idea of wilderness, laments that, “as we gaze into the mirror it holds up for us, we too easily imagine that what we behold

is Nature when in fact we see the reflection of our own unexamined longings and desires.”⁵ Cronon argues that wilderness is a profoundly unnatural construct, an idea that paradoxically licenses human exploitation of the very place we consider to be our “true home.” For Alan, the trope of nature as mirror allows us to glimpse, however opaquely, spiritual truth; for Cronon, nature as mirror narcissistically distorts our own place in the natural order of things. Alan of Lille and William Cronon may disagree on the effects of this rhetorical trope, but they share a recognition that our relation to nature is always mediated by a fantasy of return to a distant and originary place, whether the heavenly home from which we, as earthly pilgrims, are estranged or a wilderness unspoiled by human intervention.

In order to understand more clearly the medieval version of this fantasy of return, we need to attend to the rhetorical figures commonly associated with it. Medieval writers did not perceive an amorphous “raw nature” out there somewhere beyond the edge of civilization; they all agreed that, in order to discuss its physical attributes as well as its metaphysical possibilities, nature must be framed. From the thirteenth century forward, framing nature involved reading the observable manifestations of the divine plan alongside Aristotle’s works on physics, biology, and astronomy that had come to form the basis of the arts curriculum. This chapter examines the analogies, both learned and popular, that sought to make nature intelligible in the wake of this attempted intellectual synthesis. It begins by exploring the philosophical and theological tensions that inform an influential mid-thirteenth-century encyclopedia, *L’image du monde*. Its ambitious vision, looking back to older, mythographic models of nature even as it employs the insights made possible by the recent translation of the Aristotelian scientific corpus, allows us to map the fault lines that beset such a syncretic project. The *Image du monde* provides a useful starting point for discussing not just the tensions that existed among competing accounts of late medieval nature but also the tensions among the modern historiographies whose aim is to document them.

After laying out the terms in which nature is discussed by both late medieval writers and the modern historians who write about them, my focus shifts to several important metaphors, each of which reveals a particular aspect of the wider cultural disagreements in which nature was embroiled. All of these metaphors are hylozoist (from Greek *hylē*, matter, and *zoē*, life) in that they imagine nonhuman operations of growth and change in ways characteristic of intentional human activities. The Ladder of Nature, the hierarchy that runs from God to angels to humans to animals, plants, and stones, raises the problem of human exceptionalism within a shared ontological framework. The Book of Nature, wherein God records the order of his divine creation, offers a topos from which writers could comment on the benefits and limits of earthly mimesis as well as how best to read the visible world around us. The Ax of Nature, the instrument that was

responsible for dividing up the stuff of the material world according to a divinely wrought template, introduces the problem of earthly necessity in relation to God's will. Theologians, philosophers, encyclopedists, and poets all had a stake in determining the correct way to read and interpret the physical environment. Some read nature semiotically, as a series of signs that had no necessary link to the otherworldly signifier for which they stood; others paid more attention to the corporeal world itself, ferreting out a chain of causation that led from physical signs to metaphysical truths. These analogies, along with the habits of reading that they respectively encouraged, are found in both popular and academic contexts. Within the university's walls, these rhetorical strategies would become part of the lexicon for arguing over the extent to which Greek science was compatible with Christian revelation. Extramurally, they come to shape the extended allegorization of nature that is such a conspicuous feature of late medieval vernacular poetry in Britain and France, the scaffolding under the figural hermeneutics of the Lady Natures found in writers such as Jean de Meun, Guillaume de Deguileville, Geoffrey Chaucer, and John Lydgate.

While arguments by analogy were the staple of medieval science and philosophy, a marked mistrust of such arguments emerges during the Scientific Revolution. Some seventeenth-century empiricists self-consciously attempted to expunge metaphorical language from their descriptions of the physical world, and analogy was consigned to the realms of fiction and metaphysics. As Peter Dear, Brian Vickers, and others have argued, this attempt at rhetorical purification was not wholly successful, though its partial success can still be measured by how odd and fanciful we find medieval descriptions of nature in form (poetry) and in style (rhetorically self-conscious).⁶ The final part of this chapter examines what the early modern mistrust of analogy has in common with a more recent version of this antirhetorical sentiment found in modern environmental criticism. If medieval writers found analogy to be a primary tool for understanding the divide between human and nonhuman, immaterial ideas and physical matter, it is important to try to understand why one of the recurring features of modernity has been its rejection of this very same analogizing habit.

Writing Nature: Between Cosmology and Causes, Between Intellectual History and Cultural Studies

According to the historian M.-D. Chenu, the twelfth century "discovered nature."⁷ While personified Nature appears briefly in earlier classical poetry, it was only then, as Peter Dronke and George Economou remind us, that the goddess *Natura* truly began her literary career.⁸ This career is associated most notably with the school of Chartres, which produced sweeping

mythographic accounts of the cosmos and its inception—including Bernard Silvestris’s *Macrocosmus* (ca. 1140s), Alan of Lille’s *De planctu naturae* (ca. 1160s), and its sequel the *Anticlaudianus* (ca. 1180)—as well as the natural philosophical investigations of William of Conches’s *Dragmaticon* (ca. 1140s). These twelfth-century writers sought to harmonize Neoplatonic theories of immaterial ideas with biblical revelation about God’s creative nature. Their views were largely consistent with an Augustinian understanding of how the world worked: the material world we see around us is but a covering for spiritual truths, a covering that needs to be pulled back in order to reveal the lessons beneath, behind, or above. The natural world could be observed, but these observations were primarily useful to the extent that they allowed humans to see the difference between the changeable sublunary world and the eternal realm beyond it. True understanding came from transcending the earthly world and, in doing so, removing the impediments to our spiritual insight. Cosmographical works, even as they affirm the world as God’s creation, often emphasize the unreliability of the visible world of sensation in the face of the stable world of forms, the perfected domain of the divine.⁹

If the twelfth century “discovered” Nature, the thirteenth century sought to measure her growth and to document her myriad workings in a seemingly endless procession of encyclopedic texts. It was the century of the *summa* and the *speculum*: the translation of Aristotle’s scientific works, begun in the twelfth century by writers such as James of Venice, Michael Scot, and William of Moerbeke, made possible the burst of thirteenth-century scholastic commentaries on these works by Robert Grosseteste, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Roger Bacon, and others.¹⁰ The integration of this Aristotelian knowledge into the university curriculum gave rise to an alternative understanding of nature that saw the seeds of spiritual reality as already present within the terrestrial world. Writers began to elaborate the ethical implications of the immanent patterns they saw around them, patterns that allowed them to discern, however faintly, the outline of the providential plan. Such an understanding was articulated most forcefully by Thomas Aquinas, whose writings sought to align earlier Greek natural philosophy with Christian doctrine. For Aristotle, all natural creatures grew and developed according to a plan, a process that was directed from the inside toward its final fulfillment or perfection (*telos*); Aquinas and his followers believed that this teleological process of becoming was directed by God.¹¹ While the visible world would never provide a key to revealed truth, knowledge of it was hermeneutically significant, because all creatures in this world are ordered with God as their end. Knowing about both the ordering process and the predictable end therefore gives one knowledge of the divine plan, if only indirectly. This validation of the sensory world was reinforced not only in the university arts curriculum but in an emerging extraacademic encyclopedic tradition that enumerated all

aspects of the visible and invisible worlds. Beginning with God and the angels, these works moved down through the ontological ranks until they had analyzed each category of sentience in turn. The taxonomical structure of thirteenth-century encyclopedias such as Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum maius* (before the mid-thirteenth century) and Bartholomaeus Anglicus's *De proprietatibus rerum* (ca. 1245) suggests an epistemological unity between natural and moral knowledge.¹² In these texts, according to Adrian Armstrong and Sarah Kay, "learning about the world is, at the same time, learning about oneself, since knowledge that is presented as scientific is, at the same time, moral knowledge."¹³

The contrary pressures exerted by these two modes of interpreting nature—the former usually designated "Augustinian," the latter "Aristotelian"—act as the magnetic poles at either end of a continuum along which academic and extra-academic writers on nature arrayed themselves. It was not the case that the Aristotelian metaphors of nature, elaborated in the thirteenth century, easily succeeded Augustinian ones, causal models seamlessly replacing cosmological ones. Mary Franklin-Brown rightly reminds us that, in thirteenth-century encyclopedism, compilers "were expanding their texts to absorb the Aristotelian [elements] without entirely abandoning the Augustinian"; in encyclopedias such as those by Vincent of Beauvais and Bartholomeus Anglicus, the Augustinian symbolic tradition not only "survives and coexists" with the new Aristotelian science, "it may even be made to justify it."¹⁴ It is the persistent competition between these paradigms that gave shape to the rhetorical practice of those later medieval writers—whether theologians, philosophers, encyclopedists, or poets—who wanted to express concisely their own views about how nature could signify.

One of the earliest and most popular vernacular encyclopedias, Gossuin (alternately, Gautier) de Metz's *Image du monde* (ca. 1245) exhibits precisely this syncretic outlook, seeking to graft the new learning onto an older cosmographical armature. A loose adaptation of Honorius of Autun's twelfth-century *Imago mundi*, it adds significant amounts of natural philosophical information to its Latin source, resulting in a work that places more emphasis on the mechanics of the natural world (physics, geography, astronomy) than on its theological underpinnings. With more than two hundred extant manuscripts in both verse and prose, the *Image* was perhaps the most popular French medieval encyclopedia produced; it circulated widely and was later printed by Caxton in 1481 as *The Mirrour of the World*.¹⁵ The *Image* shows a particular concern with reconciling Aristotelian physics with Christian teachings, and, in attempting to do so, Gossuin produces what might be termed an *Aristote moralisé*. Aristotelian ideas of natural motion—the idea that the elements and other physical entities all have an originary place to which they seek to return—are reimagined in the *Image* as providing a moral, not just material, key to the world. The encyclopedia's opening establishes a topology of virtue where good things, through

inclination, move upward toward God, while evil things are drawn in the opposite direction: “Et li biens couvient aler contremont devant Dieu, qui est cler et purs et nez. E li maus, qui est obscurs et laiz et tenebreus seur toute rein, laist le bien et descent aval” (And the good things must necessarily go upward toward God, who is clear, pure, and spotless. And the sinful things, which are all obscure, horrible, and dark, leave the good and descend downward).¹⁶ This “placializing” aspect of Aristotle’s physics has been transferred to the moral realm in a much more literal way than it was in Aristotle’s own ethical and political writings. Armstrong and Kay aptly summarize how the *Image* differs from a more strictly Augustinian encyclopedic vision: “Instead of the natural world being the mysterious object that man strives to penetrate, with the benefit of a privileged relationship to God and the help of the liberal arts, now nature mediates between God and such knowledge as man is able to command.”¹⁷

This moralized physics is also apparent in the program of illustrations found in the Cambridge University Library copy of the *Image du monde*, MS Gg.1.1, a fourteenth-century trilingual manuscript that also includes the *Livre de Sydrac*, a physiognomy, a confessional manual, a treatise on chivalry, a tract on learning French with English glosses, as well as other religious and didactic works. The chapter describing how earth, as the heaviest element, remains in the center of the world is accompanied by a drawing that depicts bands representing the four elements separated into their respective levels. The whole world, however, is held aloft by the figures of two angels (Figure 1). This is a world where Aristotelian principles of natural necessity (such as the doctrine of elemental motion) are combined with Christian spiritual necessity (such as the soul’s natural inclination toward the good) to create a teleological vision of the cosmos. In contradistinction to the cosmographical view, however, the vernacular encyclopedist found an ethical utility in the continual change of *physis*. Significantly, the *Image*’s primary sources, Alexander Neckam’s *De naturis rerum* and Honorius of Autun’s *Imago mundi*, do not begin with such a literal attempt at integrating Aristotelian physics and Christian metaphysics.¹⁸ These Latin writers are instead interested in how the earth manifests the truths of Genesis—how visible things can be impressed into a search for spiritual signs. The vernacular *Image du monde*, by contrast, articulates a bivalent vision, suggesting that scripture and science each express truths found in the other.

This difference suggests that as Aristotelian natural knowledge was disseminated into the vernacular, it was revised further to emphasize its compatibility with Christian doctrine for a more popular audience. This popular audience is attested by the format of the Cambridge manuscript; as a small but thick codex of more than six hundred leaves, it seems suited for private rather than public reading, while its contents suggest ownership by an “upwardly mobile gentry family.”¹⁹ As a household miscellany, this

manuscript would have brought the Aristotelian natural philosophy popular in universities into a domestic setting.

The *Image's* desire to harmonize Greek science with Christian theology, however, also leads its author into what is perhaps the encyclopedia's most surprising assertion: that Aristotle and Plato both believed in the Trinity. We find this claim among the encyclopedia's short *vitae* of pagan philosophers (much to the consternation of its modern editor):



FIGURE 1. How the earth hangs in the sky. *Image du monde*, Cambridge,

Icès .ii. trouverent .iii. personne en .1. seul lieu, et le
prouverent. Mais il n'en mistrent riens en latin. Car il estoient
amdeus sarrazins, comme cil qui furent lonc tans avant que
Jhesu Crist, bien .ccc. anz. Si furent tuit leur livre en grieu.²⁰

(These two [i.e., Plato and Aristotle] found three persons in
one place and proved it. However, they did not put this
knowledge into Latin, since both were pagans who lived a
long time before Jesus Christ, more than three hundred years.
Thus, they wrote all their books in Greek.)

The proleptically Christian doctrine ascribed to Aristotle and Plato is significantly absent from the *Image's* twelfth-century Latin sources.²¹ While Plato was occasionally discussed as a proto-Trinitarian by medieval writers due to the emanative aspects of his account of cosmic creation, this claim was understandably not made about Aristotle, who postulated a relentlessly singular unmoved mover. The *Image's* claim effectively transfers views attributed by medieval commentators to Plato onto his pupil Aristotle. How are we then to understand this singular claim that Aristotle believed in the Trinity?

This pronouncement could suggest a lingering anxiety over the priority of Greek learning in relation to medieval Latinate culture, a linguistic incompatibility that the passage highlights. The philosophers' inability to speak like true Christians was due less to the regrettable difficulty of living prior to Christ's arrival than it was to the fact that they did not participate directly in the culture of *latinitas*. Had the philosophers' Trinitarian claims been made in Latin rather than in Greek, the author suggests, they would have had wider currency. The temporal causality of the passage implies, somewhat misleadingly, the coextensiveness of Latinity with Christianity, eliding the fact that Latin, too, had enjoyed a long pagan past before the Incarnation. In aligning pagan knowledge with Greek, the writer must also ignore the *koine* of the New Testament, a seemingly apposite linguistic fact. In showing that only a linguistic barrier separates pagan philosophers from good medieval Christians, the Trinitarian claim seems more particularly designed to alleviate fears surrounding the potential incommensurability of Greek learning and revelation. By the middle of the thirteenth century, these fears were growing more intense as theologians began to argue over the extent of this compatibility as well as the theological dangers Aristotelianism may pose. The competition between Augustinian and Aristotelian visions of nature, differences expressed in form, genre, and theological commitments, were to become entangled with university politics over the course of the century, a process ultimately resulting in the

condemnation of some Aristotelian ways of looking at nature in 1277 at the University of Paris, an event whose far-ranging effects will be discussed in the next chapter. Long before this moment, however, we see these tensions in the *Image du monde*, a vernacular encyclopedia that served not just as a vehicle for Aristotelian ideas about nature but as an apologia for them as well.

The next section of this chapter will argue that late medieval metaphors of nature were tempered in a dialectical process similar to that we have seen at work in the *Image du monde*, one that was at once rhetorical, theological, and philosophical. Before turning to my discussion of this natural tropology, however, it is necessary to clarify the terminology that I have been using and that will be employed in the remainder of the book. My discussion employs a constellation of terms to describe the two poles outlined above, but some caveats should be observed about their use. While the medieval figuration of nature can be roughly mapped onto certain classical, scholastic, and generic binaries—Neoplatonic versus Aristotelian, Augustinian versus Thomist, cosmographical versus encyclopedic—each of these pairings brings with it certain limitations as well as benefits. To use any one particular set positions us within a relatively specific area of cultural inquiry—the reception of pagan antiquity, say, or thirteenth-century academic politics or the formal properties and horizons of expectation raised by a particular text. Sometimes such specificity is useful; at other times, several of these factors may be in play all at once.

This terminological complexity becomes particularly apparent when we look at histories of nature that seek to chart its genealogy over several centuries, such as the historian and philosopher R. G. Collingwood's study *The Idea of Nature* (1945). While his primary focus is on the *Naturphilosophie* of the nineteenth century, he argues that medieval ideas about nature largely conformed to those inherited in a piecemeal fashion from classical Platonic (or Neoplatonic) and Aristotelian thought, an imperfect, patchwork model but one that, according to Collingwood, would remain largely unchanged from classical times up to the sixteenth century.²² Without making Collingwood the whipping boy for this earlier model of historiography, it should be noted that despite the many continuities with this earlier Greek tradition, the classical divisions are potentially problematic in part because it is difficult to disentangle a "pure" Aristotelianism from a "pure" Neoplatonism due to their interconnected medieval reception.²³ The larger problem in using these classical terms by themselves, however, is that the late medieval period was tasked with the difficult problem of how to conform a definition of nature as *ens mobile* (being subject to movement), in Aquinas's phrase, with the strictures of a medieval Christianity that saw nature as an extension of God's unchanging plan. Collingwood's thesis does not account for the fact that the encounter between Aristotelian science and a Neoplatonic, Augustinian theology was often an unhappy one, one whose

effects will be described in more detail in the next chapter. For now, we can gesture toward this infelicity only briefly. Writing in the 1280s, the English Franciscan John Peckham (or Pecham), later archbishop of Canterbury, described the tumultuous conflicts of Paris in the 1270s as a conflict between those who followed Augustine (such as himself, the theologian and philosopher Bonaventure, and the bishop of Paris Étienne Tempier) and those who followed Aristotle (whether the so-called radical Aristotelians such as Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia or the “mainstream” ones such as Aquinas).²⁴ Modern historians of science have generally adopted the terms “Augustinian” and “Aristotelian” along the lines set out by Peckham.²⁵ Freighted with the full doctrinal weight of the conflict between the arts and theology faculties, however, the contrast between these terms applies most accurately to the university setting in which these conflicts arose.

In what follows, then, I frequently employ the terms “transcendent” and “immanent” in reference to rhetorical views of nature, especially when wishing to avoid classical anachronism or a theological teleology. There is obviously a fair amount of common ground between the two views: both share the conviction that nature is a reflection of the divine plan even as they acknowledge that our attempts to interpret it offer only probabilistic knowledge at best, given the limits of human understanding. However, the two positions differ substantially in their opposing views of what actually licenses analogies of the natural world. On one side was the transcendent model associated with an Augustinian tradition that held nature could only be discussed by metaphoric means because nature, as an extension of the divine plan, remains inscrutable to the human intellect. What cannot be observed directly must be discussed indirectly. From this insight arose the mythographic mode of imagining nature, one that asserts correspondences between allegorical figures and natural forces. In Bernard Silvestris’s cosmological fable *De mundi universitate* (ca. 1150), for example, Nature creates humankind with the assistance of Endelechia—the world soul—who first animates the sensible world and then of Physis, who fashions the material bodies into which the heavenly soul is later added. Where Nature intentionally veils herself, analogy is always necessary. On the other side we find a model of immanent analogy associated with an Aristotelian view that posited a shared causation between the human and the nonhuman worlds. The same series of causes that explains the production of a bronze statue—material, formal, efficient, and final—could explain equally well how the acorn becomes the oak; both were end-directed processes, though the former qualifies as “art” (since its agent is human), while the latter is designated as “natural” (since its cause lies within). On this view, analogy functions as an ontological binding agent that guarantees the unity of very different processes of sublunary growth and change.²⁶

While I identify these two primary ways of looking at nature in order to discuss how later writers fashioned aesthetic positions in relation to them,

these ways of seeing are imagined as “poles” or nodes rather than as a strict binary, since writers who employed them, whether academic or popular, occupied many graduated positions along the continuum running between them. These two poles, however, were distinct enough to be recognized as such in academic arguments over how to understand nature, arguments that, in turn, shaped the subject positions available to later medieval popular writers and their audiences.

Understanding the medieval tropology of nature requires more than just attempting to re-create the various cultural pressures to which such figures were inevitably subject, pointing out an Augustinian idea here, an Aristotelian one there (even when such ideas can be readily identified). It is also necessary to analyze our own preconceptions about historical writing. What stories can nature’s past tell us? It is perhaps unsurprising that this topic has been a mainstay of intellectual history throughout the twentieth century. Collingwood’s study is but one example from among many, to which we could add titles such as A. O. Lovejoy’s *The Great Chain of Being: The History of an Idea* (1936), Clarence J. Glacken’s *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (1967), and Keith Thomas’s *Man and the Natural World* (1983). All of these books (and numerous others) fall under the general rubric of intellectual history or “history of ideas,” insofar as all trace how particular modes of philosophical thinking about nature change over time, and their considerable insights have been drawn upon in this study to varying degrees.²⁷ Perhaps the most influential of those historians writing in this vein, however, has been Hans Blumenberg, and it is with his work that my project engages most consistently on the topic of what metaphors of nature have meant historically. In a series of works including the essay “Nachahmung der Natur” (Imitation of Nature, 1957) and *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt* (The Legibility of the World, 1981), Blumenberg seeks to trace the interrelation of those things a society deems natural and those it deems artificial (whether art or technology).²⁸ Whether or not art should imitate nature becomes the defining question of every age; the great shift to modernity occurs, according to Blumenberg, when humanism allows the Renaissance to emerge from the shadow of a model of Aristotelian mimesis (the belief that art necessarily imitates nature) in order to celebrate human invention in its own right. The category of nature was the place where one could simultaneously explore shifting aesthetic standards, contextualize man’s attitude toward technological advances, and, ultimately, define modernity; as such, it is a powerful philosophical heuristic.

The past few decades have seen the intellectual history approach to nature largely replaced by the rise of an environmental criticism that, leaving the question of the genealogy of modernity to one side, sought to define nature in terms of the material practices associated with it at any given historical moment. Under this broad umbrella, we can locate the

works of writers as diverse as Raymond Williams, Donna Haraway, Val Plumwood, and William Cronon, just to name a few.²⁹ This shift has set up a contest over how best to narrate the story of nature, even as it has changed how intellectual historians frame their research. For Collingwood, Lovejoy, and an earlier generation of intellectual historians, ideas had biographies of their own, life histories that moved (to some extent) independently of the particular moment in which any given episode was produced. This work was significant in that it offered an alternative to documenting a particular work's sources and analogues, or, much less, to appraising the "value" of a given work. Taking its cue from cultural studies, more recent intellectual history seeks to understand its objects by contextualizing patterns of thought in terms of the material conditions that fostered them.³⁰ While both approaches now share this ground, they still differ in significant ways. Intellectual historians, by and large, see their job as constructing a causal historical narrative over time, while cultural historians prefer to map the diverse intellectual pressures in evidence at a particular moment. If intellectual history can seem idealizing or elitist—interested primarily in disembodied ideas or great thinkers—cultural history, at least in the form practiced in the 1980s and 1990s, was wedded to a belief that most things could be reduced to "discourse," whether they meant by that language or a wider set of social symbols. Intellectual historians sometimes bristle at historical models that sought to explain philosophical concepts in terms of something else altogether. The historian Maurice Mandelbaum, for instance, critiques this belief as a species of historical "monism," the idea that the opinions of a specific writer or a particular strain of thought can be reduced to other external, cultural factors.³¹ He instead champions the view that a particular philosophical idea may have an "internal" history of its own, independent of developments in other cultural arenas such as science or religion. Keeping Mandelbaum's cautionary words in mind, the more materialist models of historiography are particularly useful for writing the history of nature insofar as they allow for the influence of collective or even nonhuman actants (such as geography or the environment). This insight shifts the historical record away from a more internal, "intentionalist" account, and suggests that nature is not solely determined by human narratives about it, even if it is influenced by these narratives.

My methodology emerges from the intersection of these two historical contests over narrating nature: the one medieval (the contest between immanent and transcendent ways of looking at nature), the other modern (the historiographical debate among intellectual and cultural historians). If, as Lovejoy says, "ideas are the most migratory things in the world," their migration patterns are determined by where there is water (a sympathetic poet, say, or an arts master willing to entertain them) or where there is not a tiger (a bishop seeking to proscribe them).³² In offering a rhetorical history of Nature's late medieval voice, this book shares with intellectual history its

desire to make sense of a broad pattern of cultural change over several centuries. In so doing, I'll argue for continuities with classical traditions as well as certain casual connections among views about nature expressed by the poets I consider in later chapters, even as I identify how these ideas are subject to the pressures of manuscript circulation (their production and dissemination in popular as opposed to academic communities, the emergence of peculiarly medieval textual forms or genres designed to address particular questions). With cultural studies, this exposition acknowledges the material pressures at work on the history of this idea. Each appearance of the normative Lady Nature is determined not just by previous literary uses but by current technological advances, theological arguments, and university politics. It will offer an argument about what Aristotelian ways of looking at nature offered medieval writers over and against the Neoplatonic view, and, moreover, what such a view continues to offer modern environmental critics who seek to try out alternates to Enlightenment ontological models.

Doing What Comes Figuratively

When medieval writers described how nature worked or outlined the extent of its powers, they almost always employed some mode of taxonomical framing. This habit attests not just the well-known medieval passion for *enumeratio* but a deeper, ecumenical recognition of the versatility of tropological classification. Part of the appeal is that medieval taxonomies (including metaphors), in and of themselves, do not possess essential meanings; rather, they can be deployed strategically by all sorts of writers, from scholastic theologians to preachers to social satirists to love poets. To put it bluntly, taxonomies do not mean; they are used. The metaphors considered here—ladder, book, and ax—exist on a continuum of meaning that ran from transcendence to immanence, from Neoplatonic to Aristotelian. Medieval natural metaphors participate in a textual politics of *physis*, a Greek term that is usually translated in Medieval Latin as *natura*, a term with its own theological, philosophical, and scientific resonances. While Plato had used the term to denominate those things that exist independently of the human realm of consciousness, those things separate from human conventions and morality, Aristotle redefined this contrast on the basis of motion rather than custom: those things that had their own proper motions belonged to nature (anything that carried its source of motion within it and acted toward an end) over and against those things that were made by art (anything moved by something outside itself and lacking an inherent drive toward its own final form). It was during the late medieval period that a semantic emphasis on physical change asserted itself at the expense of its more metaphysical connotations. Thinking about metaphors that represent

nature within the context outlined above—including the formal and the generic alongside the academic and political—suggests that the metaphors whereby nature was understood were neither transparent nor transhistorical.

As Foucault reminds us, different systems of order entail different epistemologies and intuitions: imagining nature as something to be climbed (*scala*) as opposed to something to be read (*liber*) as opposed to an instrument (*securim*) will inevitably suggest different relations obtaining between society and nature. However, within an individual metaphor of nature—whether ladder, book, ax, or anything else—wide semantic variance can also be found, since each figure was used over the course of the late medieval period by writers with virtually opposing theological, political, and social agendas. The discussion below focuses on several metaphors that we might designate “key tropes” by adapting Raymond Williams’s process for identifying a set of cultural “keywords” that are operative at a particular historical moment. For Williams, a keyword was one that could be used in multiple, often mutually exclusive ways by any number of speakers, a polysemy that usually signaled a wider conflict over a social or political reality.³³ If the Neoplatonist Alan of Lille imagined nature as a book, so too did the Aristotelian Thomas Aquinas. This shared usage is less a sign of philosophical syncretism (or, even less, an impoverished figural lexicon) and more a mark of the inherent mobility of medieval natural metaphor. Such a comparison serves as a reminder that metaphors are themselves mobile, subject to intensely local social and religious pressures.

In arguing for the instrumentality of medieval metaphors of nature, this chapter demonstrates how this metaphoric practice differs from some of its closest modern analogues. According to the historian of science Evelyn Fox Keller, the metaphors used by twentieth-century scientists to describe natural systems often reflect an unstated ideological bias or predetermine the results of their studies (or both). For instance, scientists from Darwin to Schrödinger imagined genetic activity as directed by a “manikin,” an active agent that told cells how to develop.³⁴ This anthropomorphizing metaphor prevented biologists and physicists from imagining the gene as part of an impersonal, informational feedback loop—the more prevalent metaphor today. In Keller’s view, once a writer has decided on a guiding analogy, other analogies will largely be excluded, and the research agenda moves toward a particular conclusion in part on the basis of these underlying (and frequently unexamined) rhetorical assumptions. In this sense, analogy is destiny in the modern natural sciences. The medieval metaphors for nature described in this chapter work differently, since most were more “free range”—that is, a particular figure was neither Augustinian nor Aristotelian in some essential way. Lacking an inherent meaning in themselves, individual tropes could be mobilized according to the ideological persuasions of a given writer and put to a variety of theological and natural philosophical ends.

Debates about nature have historically been debates about the extent to which the human can be considered a part of the natural world. The publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) catalyzed an argument over whether or not man shared a common ancestor with other creatures. Darwin's evidence for the mutability of species suggested that man was very much a part of the animal kingdom rather than existing separately from it, peering down on it from the privileged position assigned to him in Genesis. Moreover, these debates raised the related issue of whether change in nature was random or designed, and, if designed, what meanings it could generate. To question the order of nature in this way was also to question the social doctrines that it underwrote (among them Victorian gender and class relations). Nineteenth-century natural theology saw man as the interpreter of the divine plan; the human gave meaning to nature just as Adam gave names to the animals. Nature was imagined as an organic body, a "peaceable kingdom" over which man presided with an easy, unqualified majesty. Darwin's nature, by contrast, is an agonistic arena where individuals and species jostle for evolutionary advantage. In this constant competition, man is just one more competitor, savvier than the others perhaps, but in competition nonetheless. The meaning of existence is produced from within this struggle rather than bestowed upon it by a neutral observer located somewhere outside of it. Similar concerns inform contemporary debates in modern evolutionary biology, though the Darwinian stage has now been reduced from the level of organisms to the level of genes. In the twenty-first century, human life has been shown to differ only in degree rather than in kind from yeasts, bacteria, and bats, since all are organized around a shared genetic scaffolding. Physicists and molecular biologists, however, continue to argue over the mechanics of genetic selection: Are genes selfish, attempting only to replicate themselves, or is their replication determined by more symbiotic concerns, the greater reproductive good of related organisms? In this debate, we see not only a continuing anthropomorphism of natural process—genes imagined as either egoistic or altruistic—but also the abiding question of whether nature works according to a plan or in a more contingent fashion.

Modern debates about nature are anticipated by their medieval counterparts in substance, if not in specifics. The question of the place of the human was central to the medieval metaphor of the *scala naturae*. Originally derived from the Neoplatonic idea that, after A. O. Lovejoy, came to be known as the Great Chain of Being, the Ladder (or sometimes "stairway") of Nature divides the world into ascending degrees of being: stones have existence; plants, life and existence; animals add motion; humans add reason—all the way up to God.³⁵ This is a sliding scale of sentience, a sequence of bodies moving upward toward perfection. In this scheme, man is the pivotal

category, since he possesses both a material body and an immaterial soul. One of the most influential expressions of how love binds together this sequence of celestial and earthly things is found in Boethius's *Consolatio philosophiae*, a work that was translated by Chaucer around 1380: "Al this accordaunce [and] ordenaunce of thynges is bounde with love, that governeth erthe and see, and hath also comandement to the hevene. And yif this love slakede the bridelis, alle thynges that now loven hem togidres wolden make batayle contynuely, and stryven to fordo the fassoun of this world, the which they now leden in accordable feith by fayre moevynges."³⁶ What is stable for Boethius is God's steady hand on the reins of a contingent, changeable nature wherein even the forms and the elements would be inconstant if left to their own devices. It is only "the fayre chaine of love," familiar from Theseus's well-known speech at the end of the *Knight's Tale*, that binds all elements and "species of things" in their proper places. This version of the *scala* can be considered transcendent insofar as it imagines the binding love as a force emanating downward from the Creator toward his creation, rather like the sun's rays. This emanative chain is imagined as one guaranteed by the demiurge itself, a concept assimilated to the Christian deity by later writers following Plotinus and others.

The devotional aspects of this chain are eloquently defined by Bonaventure, who imagines the ladder as what takes the devout Christian from this world to the next. In his *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, he elaborates on the biblical image of Jacob's ladder found in Genesis 28: "Quoniam igitur prius est ascendere quam descendere in scala Iacob, primum gradum ascensionis collocemus in imo, ponendo totum istum mundum sensibilem nobis tanquam speculum, per quod transeamus ad Deum" (Now since we must ascend before we can descend on Jacob's ladder, let us place the first step of our ascent at the bottom, putting the whole world of sense-objects before us as a mirror through which we may pass to God, the highest creative Artist).³⁷ In this passage, Bonaventure combines the *scala naturae* with that familiar late medieval trope of the *speculum naturae*, suggesting that the emanative quality of the ladder resonates with the reflective capacity of the mirror. While the ladder goes in both directions, the privileged direction is clearly up: the devout Christian climbs it to reach his creator. The ladder connects nature with God but also witnesses the imperative to transcend it, because, according to Bonaventure, nature is deformed by sin.³⁸ In a world where nature is defined as the *vestigia* of the divine mind visible in external things, it is the realm that, farthest from its emanative source, contains the least degree of reality. This Neoplatonic ladder is familiar from the later writings of negative mystics such as Walter Hilton in *The Scale of Perfection* for whom climbing the spiritual ladder means leaving the sensory world far behind. For Bonaventure, Hilton, and Chaucer's Theseus, the well-defined rungs of the *scala naturae* support a stable moral order, a static hierarchy that allows for a transparent valuation

of ontological categories in terms of their relative distance from God.

This Neoplatonic ladder was refashioned by medieval commentators on Aristotle, whose scientific writings reimagined the varying steps (or degrees) of the ladder as the result of dynamic causal relations that structure the physical world. While both the Aristotelian and Platonic versions of the chain are held together by love, the Aristotelian version reverses the polarity: it is not the Creator's love raining down on his creatures that reins in and stabilizes the disordered strife of the cosmic elements, but rather the creaturely love directed upward to the Creator that was ultimately responsible for linking the motion of the Unmoved Mover to the rest of the universe. This principle is stated most simply in the *Metaphysics*: "Movet autem quasi desideratum, et motum vero alia movet" (He [the First Mover] produces motion by being loved, and so he moves all the other moving things).³⁹ For late medieval scholastics, such a model would have resonated with the visual nature of love itself, often expressed by way of the theory of intromission, wherein an object (or beloved) projects itself into the mind of the viewer and hence has a quasi-causal power over the subject. In this model, the world's love for its creative catalyst suggests a potential reciprocity between the two that was difficult to reconcile with a medieval Christianity that could not imagine a deity who was linked to his creation through causal bonds and therefore potentially dependent on the world that he had created.⁴⁰

In addition to imagining a ladder that could be climbed as well as descended, Aristotle's model differed in another important way. While the hierarchical scale of sentience remains (with those things demonstrating more "order" occupying higher positions on the scale), Aristotle's revision blurs the dividing lines between each rung of the ladder. In the *Historia animalium*, he observes just how difficult it can be to differentiate between two contiguous rungs:

Nature proceeds little by little from things lifeless to animal life in such a way that it is impossible to determine the exact line of demarcation, nor on which side thereof an intermediate form should lie. Thus, next after lifeless things in the upward scale comes the plant, and of plants one will differ from another as to its amount of apparent vitality; and, in a word, the whole genus of plants, whilst it is devoid of life as compared with an animal, is endowed with life as compared with other corporeal entities.... And so throughout the entire animal scale there is a graduated differentiation in amount of vitality and in capacity for motion.⁴¹

Categories of being are still ranked; however, it is now imagined as a dynamic network bound together with causal connections. The Aristotelian categories display a marked ontological elasticity, as the distance separating

each rung on the ladder narrows. This version also highlights the comparative charisma of categories other than the human. A Neoplatonic emphasis on the transcendence of being—where the lower life forms were described in terms of privation (i.e., animals lack reason; plants, motion and reason; stones, motion, reason, and being)—is replaced by an insistence on immanent physical qualities observable to the senses (such as a capacity for motion or a complex structure). This incrementalist view of natural categories was also emphasized by thirteenth-century Aristotelians such as Albertus Magnus, whose *De animalibus* accentuates this aspect: “Natura non facit distantia genera, nisi faciat aliquid medium inter ea: quia natura non transit de extremo in extremum nisi per medium” (Nature never causes genres to be distant without creating some medium between them, since nature only passes from extreme to extreme through a medium).⁴² Unlike the discrete categories of the Neoplatonic Chain of Being, the medieval commentary on the Aristotelian *scala* emphasizes becoming over being, since each “step” contains that which comes before. While the immanent ladder retains hierarchies of being, it need not necessarily imply the same kind of human exceptionalism that the transcendent version implies. In the *Historia animalium*, Aristotle explains that his taxonomical approach to the animal world begins first with the human not because the human is privileged but because it is what we know best: “To begin with, we must take into consideration the parts of man. For, just as any group tests coinage against that with which it is most familiar, so must we do in other matters. And, of course, man is the animal with which we are the most familiar.”⁴³ The immanent ladder suggests a model of comparative pluralism rather than one that assumes the privileged place of the human; animals are compared with man, not because the human is a stable and self-evident benchmark, but because all judgment, like monetary exchange, is relative. Moreover, this integrated understanding of the ladder undergirds the Aristotelian notion of the human soul as partitive and, in effect, cumulative, containing the vegetative and the animal souls in addition to the “sensitive” or “rational” soul unique to the human.⁴⁴ This conception differs from a Platonic soul autonomous in substance from the rest of the material world, and, hence, independent of the body that only temporarily houses it. The immanent revision of the transcendent *scala naturae* influenced much later medieval encyclopedic writing in form as well as in content. For instance, it structures Bartholomeus Anglicus’s *De proprietatibus rerum* (as well as Trevisa’s English translation of it), whose formal principle imitates the *scala naturae* by beginning with God and moving down the ladder. The ontological insights of the Aristotelian version of the *scala* also provide Bartholomeus with some of his natural philosophical material, such as his account of the Aristotelian tripartite soul that foregrounds the interrelation of its vegetable, animal, and rational parts.⁴⁵

Comparing the transcendent and immanent versions of the *scala naturae*

suggests that medieval writers used the metaphor in very different ways, variations that generic differences alone cannot explain. In a transcendent epistemology, this metaphor stresses the unique place of the human, the immutability of ontological categories, and the unidirectional power emanating down from the Creator. By contrast, the immanent version (often found in later medieval encyclopedic writings) emphasizes the continuous nature of the created world, the possibilities inherent in becoming rather than the perfected stasis of being, and a first creative principle connected to its creation not just through its own benevolent nature but through a series of causal linkages initiated in the things themselves. While all medieval writers believed that man occupied a unique position on this ladder, they did not all agree on the extent of this uniqueness nor its finite nature.

Books

If Nature's ladder could be climbed in a variety of ways, so too reading Nature's book could unlock multiple stories. The number of medieval writers who employed this trope is vast, and its origins and dissemination have been surveyed by Ernst Curtius, Hans Blumenberg, Jesse Gellrich, and others.⁴⁶ Blumenberg called the Book of Nature one of the "absolute metaphors"; by this, he means that its changing fortunes, when charted diachronically across time, offer a window into how human experience is converted into *Weltbild*. On his account, Aristotelian scholastics rarely employed this metaphor because their method of knowing the Creator through his creation de-emphasized the absolute freedom of that Creator in deference to the regularity of his established order.⁴⁷ My argument here, following that of Lodi Nauta, revises Blumenberg by arguing that Aristotelian scholastics did use the trope; however, they had different ends in mind.⁴⁸ Reading metaphors synchronically can thus show us the variation that Blumenberg says is characteristic of the diachronic reading: once again, the same metaphor can voice any number of points along the continuum that links immanent to transcendent approaches to the material world. This trope, perhaps the most familiar of all medieval figures for nature, is significant for its plasticity, and my focus here is on how this trope came to symbolize the ideological tug-of-war between competing ideas of what material nature meant.

When Augustine read Nature's book, he saw reflected in it that other book, the Bible. Nature, if it was to be read at all, must be read through the illuminating words of scripture; to read it independently of revealed truth was to accord to reason what should properly be accorded to faith. While the "Book of the Word" precedes the "Book of God's Works" (and has priority over it), Augustine also acknowledges that the latter points us back toward the former. Revealed truth is not straightforwardly apprehensible in the Book of Nature, however; instead, its parables and typology have to be

decoded. For medieval Neoplatonists such as the Victorines, the Book of Nature was constituted of *figurae* that attest to divine wisdom and mercy. One of the most wellknown elaborations of this metaphor can be found in Hugh of St. Victor:

Vniuersus enim mundus iste sensibilis quasi quidam liber est scriptus digito Dei, hoc est uirtute diuina creatus.... Quemadmodum autem si illiteratus quis apertum librum uideat, figuras aspicit, litteras non cognoscit, ita stultus et animalis homo qui non percipit ea quae Dei sunt, in uisibilibus istis creaturis foris uidet speciem, sed non intelligit rationem; qui autem spiritalis est et omnia diiudicare potest, in eo quidem quod foris considerat pulcritudinem operis, intus conscipit quam miranda sit sapientia creatoris.⁴⁹

(For this whole visible world is as a book written by the finger of God, a book created by divine power.... But just as some illiterate man who looks upon an open book sees the figures but does not recognize the letters: just so is the foolish and brutish man who does not perceive God's things, who sees only the outward appearance of these visible creatures but does not understand the reason. However, he who is spiritual and can judge all things, while he considers outwardly the beauty of the work, he perceives inwardly how miraculous is the wisdom of the Creator.)

According to Hugh, the visible book of created nature can point to its invisible Creator, but only through a series of largely abstract signs. Nature wears a veil that must be pulled aside to reveal transcendent truth, a truth denied to the "brutish man," who looks only at material surfaces, failing to understand the meaning beyond the sensory world. This version of the Book of Nature necessitates a "symptomatic" reading that searches for the hidden, yet stable signifier; in so doing, it constructs meaning as something extrinsic to the thing itself, accessible only to a qualified interpreter engaged in diligent research. Meaning always resides elsewhere; the thing functions merely as a mute pointer to a transcendent truth. Whereas Aristotle marvels that each part of an animate being is formed for a specific purpose, each limb to its job—a purpose inherent within the animal itself—Hugh of St. Victor instead takes delight in how the varied members of the body reflect the divine plan, exclaiming, "Ecce ... in compositione humani corporis quanta elucet sapientia creatoris" (Behold ... how much wisdom of the Creator shines forth in the composition of the human body!).⁵⁰ A more pessimistic reading of the transcendent Book of Nature is found in Bonaventure, who, like Hugh of St. Victor, affirms the beauty of the cosmos as a sign of the divine plan, but mourns the fact that this semiotic system is

largely illegible to mortal understanding. While Bonaventure believes that the Book of Nature dimly reflects the glory of the Trinity, earthly signs cannot be reliably decoded due to the limitations of the human reader as well as the difficulty of the text.⁵¹ Like the Neoplatonic version of the *scala naturae*, the transcendent version of the Book of Nature emphasizes the created world as a reflection of an omnipotent deity whose reality exists offstage, largely inaccessible to the human intellect.

In the thirteenth century, the Augustinian Book of Nature gets rewritten by popular encyclopedists and scholastics in a more immanent key. Albertus Magnus and his pupil Thomas Aquinas both follow Augustine's belief that, in order to understand biblical metaphors about mustard seeds, we must know something about actual mustard seeds. They extend this imperative even further, however, claiming that spiritual and philosophical knowledge begins with what we know about existing objects. This more positive valuation of the senses and natural reason allowed Aquinas in particular to adopt the Book of Nature figure to the Aristotelian idea of the *scala naturae*. Like Augustine, Aquinas compared scripture and reason to two books, "the book of revelation" and "the book of nature," which were both "written" by God and consequently compatible.⁵² For Aquinas, however, the Book of Nature was not just a synecdoche for God, a degraded version of the Book of Scripture. Rather, the creaturely knowledge contained within it was found to exist on a continuum with its Creator. Neither a substitution for nor a mere reflection of the inner illumination that would lead to transcendent wisdom (as for Augustine, Hugh, and Bonaventure), nature was instead a step on a continuous path to divine knowledge. The idea that the Book of Nature was full of signs that only reflect the Creator in contingent or arbitrary ways would have seemed incompatible with Aquinas's belief that man can discover divine *ratio* in the causality of the cosmos, a universe guided by a conditional necessity imposed by the divine plan. On such a view, reading the microcosm of one's own body against the macrocosm of nature successfully leads one to divine knowledge, a knowledge that, while never the equivalent of revealed knowledge, does have the potential to impart ethical truths and to reaffirm the truths found in scripture. Aquinas's immanent model presumes continuity between the physical and metaphysical worlds, while the Augustinian transcendent model assumes a division between the two. This phenomenal difference has significant epistemological implications, since the immanent model suggests that knowledge is essentially unitary—to know the world was to know God—whereas the transcendent model imagined two distinct orders of knowledge, one characteristic of the fallen, sublunary world; the other, only accessible once the earthly is left behind.

The ideological differences apparent in these readings of the Book of Nature were understood by the end of the thirteenth century as standing in for a rough division between Augustinian and Aristotelian, theological and

natural philosophical, ways of understanding nature. In the university politics of the second half of the thirteenth century, Bonaventure was usually allied with the Augustinian camp of Tempier and Peckham against the Aristotelian positions of Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon, and Aquinas. In their theological commentaries, Bonaventure and Aquinas clashed over the value of Aristotelian insight into the workings of the natural world, with Bonaventure favoring a more Platonizing view characteristic of the Chartrians of the preceding century. In his *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* (Sermons on the Six Days of Creation), Bonaventure cautions that, while devout religious men could attempt to read the signs of nature, such an attempt should not even be contemplated by natural philosophers: “hunc librum legere est altissimorum contemplativorum, non naturalium philosophorum, quia solum sciunt naturam rerum, non ut vestigium” (to read this book is the right of the highest contemplatives, not of natural philosophers, because the former alone know the essence of things and not merely its outer sign).⁵³ In this way, rhetorical understandings of the Book of Nature were pressed into service in the ongoing academic struggle between two university *scientiae*, a struggle in which writers such as Bonaventure who championed a transcendent model of the Book of Nature sought to correct what they deemed the deficiencies of the immanent model expressed by writers such as Aquinas. Subsequent chapters will document how these academic debates resonated with vernacular poets who adopted the figure of the Book of Nature, the interchangeability of book and world, into what might be called a “bibliotaxopoetics.” Like their scholastic counterparts, vernacular writers employed the figure in ways that were variously transcendent, immanent, or somewhere in between the two, depending on what they believed about how poetry could represent spiritual truths as it simultaneously sought to represent credibly the physical world.

Artisans and Axes

Less familiar to us today than either the *scala naturae* or the Book of Nature is the metaphoric Ax of Nature. Yet this figure raised a set of pressing questions concerning the important medieval concept of necessity: To what extent and by what processes does the natural world inexorably manifest God’s will? This image can be usefully contrasted with its much better known cosmographical counterpart: the personified goddess Natura who is represented as the deputy of an artisan god, whether Alan of Lille’s magisterial Nature, busily casting and forging new creatures in her workshop, or Jean de Meun’s chatty Lady Nature, chastising humans for abusing their God-given free will. If the personified Nature found in Alan and Jean represented the contingent side of nature—a figure for man’s correct use of his will—the Ax of Nature was associated with nature’s necessity—a figure for the instrumental institution of the divine plan here on

earth. Like the other rhetorical figures considered in this section, Nature's ax could be swung in different ideological directions. It is employed most often, however, by encyclopedic and natural philosophical writers who argue for a readily identifiable, causal relation between the natural phenomena we perceive around us and the plan intended by God. Nature as *vicaria Dei* was more frequently used in the service of transcendent writers seeking to emphasize the absolutism of divine omnipotence, God's ability to enact any event, at any time, here on earth, regardless of the usual exigencies of nature.

Both conceptions of nature—as ax and as personified deputy—depend on the ulterior image of the artisan deity, a figure who had a long genealogy prior to the High Middle Ages. Initially found in Plato's *Timaeus*, the Platonic demiurge is imagined as a builder who gives a lively shape to inert matter. Once the material world has been infused with form and life, he rests after his exhausting artisanal labors. Nature has no real role in the design process, since order (*taxis*) and form (*eidos*) come directly from the creator and are then carried out in a quasi-mechanical, rote process. A Christianized handmaiden to the demiurge, this Neoplatonic Nature is familiar from twelfth-century cosmologies, such as the well-known personification found in Alan of Lille's *De planctu naturae*, a figure who would reappear in vernacular and Latin poetry for centuries, and whose serial reworkings will emerge as a significant theme in the remaining chapters of this book. After Alan's *artifex universalis* fashions the world, he deputizes Nature to carry on the process of creating like from like:

Me igitur tanquam pro-deam, tanquam sui vicariam, rerum
generibus sigillandis monetariam destinavit ut ego, in propriis
incudibus rerum effigies commonetans, ab incudis forma
formatum deviare non sinerem, sed mei operante sollertia ab
exemplaris vultu nullarum naturarum dotibus defraudata
exemplati facies dirivaret. Imperantis igitur imperio ego
obtemperans operando, quasi varia rerum sigillans numismata
ad exemplaris rei ymaginem, exempli exemplans effigiem, ex
conformibus conformando conformia, sigillarium rerum
vultus reddidi sigillatis.⁵⁴

(For this purpose he appointed me his agent-goddess, his vice-regent, coiner of the distinctive likenesses of the several kinds of creatures, to stamp out the images of things, each on its own anvil. I was never to allow what was formed to deviate from the form imposed at the forge, but through my diligent efforts the form of the copy would be derived directly from that of its exemplar, and it would be deprived of none of its natural attributes. Thus, obeying the command of the commander in my work, stamping the different coins of

creation with likenesses of exemplary reality, modeling the likeness of the model, assimilating similar to similar, I rendered the aspects of individual creatures according to their exemplars.)

Nature refers to herself as God's surrogate (*pro-deam* or *vicarium*), who uses the tools that the head artisan has already created. Nature, while subservient to God and deriving her limited power from him, is still a personified agent in her own right. She self-consciously points out the metaphoric nature of her own role: she is only the "mistress of the mint" (*monetariam*), printing the ruler's likeness on earthly things. In tracing the figure of the goddess Natura, George Economou calls Alan's vision of Nature the most important contribution to this idea in medieval thought.⁵⁵ Alan's attempt to reconcile Neoplatonic cosmography with Christian theology results in Nature serving as an intermediary between the two distinct epistemological realms that constitute the transcendent model: the ideal and immaterial one in which God creates, and the sensible one in which Nature executes the plan of creation. By virtue of being operative in the sensible world, Nature's process is inherently flawed as she herself makes clear when comparing her limited, "defective" powers to the artisan deity's ability to create *ex nihilo*. Nature is, in effect, a copy making copies; as the simulacra move farther away from the divine original some distortion or irregularity is inevitable. As Barbara Newman rightfully points out, Alan's vision of Nature is in keeping with his belief that natural philosophy is a subservient handmaiden to theology rather than an object of autonomous inquiry in its own right.⁵⁶

As with the previous metaphors of the ladder and the book, the Neoplatonic figure of Nature as God's ardent but imperfect substitute was transformed by thirteenth-century attempts to conciliate between theology and natural philosophy. Aristotle had adopted the artisan motif from his predecessor Plato, but he transfers to nature the power to order and to form, endowing each entity with its own natural force that directs the process of becoming from within. "The craftsmanship which in the *Timaeus* supervened from the outside," according to Friedrich Solmsen, is, in Aristotle, "an immanent characteristic of nature's own operations."⁵⁷ It is this immanent model that characterizes the figure of the Ax of Nature that appears in thirteenth-century encyclopedic and Thomist writings. We see it in the *Image du monde*, discussed above, the first French encyclopedia and one that would remain popular throughout the medieval period. Beginning with God and the creation, the *Image* went on to catalog what we could know of the world, paying special attention to the ways in which it is possible to come by that knowledge. The deity of the *Image du monde* is imagined as he who gives movement to all creatures ("tuit mouvement viennent de lui"), a description that appears to invoke Aristotle's definition of natural things as those that have their own internal principle of movement. Unlike the

removed Neoplatonic deity who “outsources” the task of earthly creation to a Fordist assembly line run first by Nature and later by Venus, her own subdelegated artisan, God in the *Image du monde* is imagined to share a more intimate relation with his creation. Nature is not a personified *artifex* in her own right but rather a tool guided by God. The primacy of nature moves all things, according to the encyclopedist, and Nature is first because she works only the will of the artisan deity, here imagined as a carpenter:

Nature fait ausi comme la hache au charpentier. Quant li
charpentiers oevre de son mestier, la hache ne fait que
trenchier. Et celui qui la tient la dresce quel part que il veult.
Et par la hache est l’oeuvre assouvie et faite selonc la maniere
de l’ouvrier. Tout autresi se donne nature et habandonne la ou
Diex veult.⁵⁸

(Nature also acts like the ax of the carpenter. When the
carpenter employs it in his work, the ax does nothing but cut.
And he who wields it addresses it to whatever part that he
desires. Thus through the ax the work is accomplished and
carried out according to the intention of the worker. Just so,
Nature surrenders and dedicates herself to that which God
desires.)

In this passage, God is the principle moving cause, the ax the instrumental cause. No longer the potentially capricious personified allegorical figure of the cosmologists, Nature is instead compared to the reliable instrument of the artisan deity, a virtual prosthesis of the divine arm. Nature’s role suggests a close relation between primary and secondary causes, since Nature, like the ax, operates by necessity; while it is the ax that does the cutting, it only cuts according to the will of the workman. This image of a shared causality reinforces the view that God’s “hand,” present in every act of creation, guides the ax; such guidance provides the first cause in an unbreakable causal chain linking the divine to the terrestrial.

* * *

While both natural metaphors—artisanal deputy and ax—figure creation as a quasi-mechanical process with respect to God’s design, their implications differ markedly. As Neoplatonic *vicaria*, Nature is imagined as copyist and the creative process as one of mimesis. As Aristotelian ax, Nature’s power is imagined as instrumental; rather than merely copying the divine plan, she actively participates in the unfolding of the divine plan. Unlike the figure of artisanal deputy, Nature as ax emphasizes that the teleology inherent in natural processes is neither conscious nor deliberative. Moreover, the Ax of Nature implies a God that is present to his creation rather than absent, one

whose hand always guides the process of becoming rather than one who, having established the creative template, now abides in a distant palace of “reality.”⁵⁹

The image of Nature as ax appeared not just in popular encyclopedic works but also in scholastic theological and philosophical treatises. The same figure is used by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa theologiae*, a work that appears some two decades after the *Image du monde*.⁶⁰ In a discussion of whether God is active in every agent cause, Aquinas argues that physical intermediaries act out the divine will (as “secondary causes”) and that God’s role is thus the end in this process: “Ut patet in artificialibus: artifex enim movetur ad agendum a fine, qui est ipsum operatum, puta arca vel lectus; et applicat ad actionem securim, quae incidit per suum acumen” (Take the crafts for an illustration: an artisan is prompted to work by some end, i.e., the very thing to be made, e.g., a box or a bed; and he sets his ax to work, i.e., to cutting, in virtue of its sharpness).⁶¹ Its appearance is an example of Aquinas’s belief in a “double causality”—the idea that a single material effect is produced by the joint effort of both God’s will and a natural cause. Such dual causality was attacked by Aquinas’s late thirteenth-century critics, since it seems to place necessity not just on the ax but on God as well, since it might be interpreted as God needing another being to execute his will in the material realm. Secondary causation, according to Aquinas, does not, in fact, register a lack in God but is rather evidence of a manifold goodness that generously and freely seeks to share the creative act with his creation. The appearance of the ax-wielding artisan God in both extra-academic and scholastic contexts suggests that this figure was in textual circulation from the mid-thirteenth century onward; while it cannot be known with any certainty in which domain the image originated, its appearance in both Latin and the vernacular demonstrates an overlap not just in a theological perspective but also in rhetorical practice.

These two contrasting visions of nature in relation to the artisan deity—as an inherent instrumental cause as opposed to a separable agent—entail different views of the relation of the material to the immaterial as well as how a writer interprets the sublunary change to which all such material bodies are subject. In Alan’s version of Nature’s forge, there is no reciprocal pressure between the material out of which something is formed and the final form that it assumes. Forms are contingent based on divine will. Nature can hammer or mold apparently without regard for the matter with which she works. Such disregard would not be possible in an Aristotelian world where matter and form are predisposed toward one another to a certain degree. This predisposition in the immanent model is given voice in the *Image du monde* when, after describing nature as an ax, the author goes on to affirm Aristotle’s famous dictum that “rien en vain ne fait nature” (nature makes nothing in vain), even when it appears that the process has gone awry, as in the case of a monstrous birth.⁶² Though nature always follows

the divine plan, sometimes the plan is impeded by a deficiency in the matter that is being fashioned: “Et la ou matere defaut, si laisse a ouvrier; et que plus y a matere, et plus oeuvre; si comme l’en voit d’aucunes bestes, dont les unes naissent a .ii. testes ou a .vi. piez ou a .i. mambre mains qu’il ne doit avoir et que sa fourme ne li remambre” (But where the matter lacks, then [nature] leaves off work. And where there is more matter, then she works more. As when one sees certain animals which are born with either two heads or six feet or with a limb lacking that it should have so that its form is not proper).⁶³

When nature is imagined as an instrument, material causes must be accommodated to the formal cut of the ax; an ax cannot be used to cut a house out of peanut butter, for instance. Rather than a general failing of nature, the monster instead results from a dialogic failure: there is a mismatch in the (ideally) reciprocal pressures exerted by matter as the recipient of action and form as the action’s instigator. The transcendent version, figured as a separable allegorical agent in the cosmographical schema, however, requires an altogether more complicated explanation for what happens when it appears that the divine plan has misfired. In the Aristotelian version, the purpose lies within the design rather than with an outside agent that imposes that design on a thing. In the Platonic artisan deity, preexisting matter has no impulse to order its development on its own; it is chaos awaiting a form imposed from the outside. So where does the error lie? Since it cannot be the fault of the plan, and since matter is merely passive—the inert substance that gets beaten or stamped—the fault must lie with the agency of Nature herself. In the transcendent model, Nature is an active intelligence, a regulative agent, but this very agency is the cause of potential problems. As a person in her own right rather than a causal process or divine prosthesis, Nature is free to abdicate her responsibilities, which, in Alan’s version, she promptly does, leaving Venus and Desire as her ill-chosen subdeputies. Venus quickly grows weary of all the stamping and hammering and abandons her post to commit adultery, subsequently contaminating man with lust and unnatural desires. As in modern-day construction projects, it is an unreliable subcontractor who is to blame when, as they inevitably do, things go wrong. In the transcendent worldview, operator error is necessary in order to explain deviation from the physical and moral perfection of the divine original; hence, Nature’s autonomy. In Alan of Lille, Nature’s absence (and ultimately the absence of the artisan creator) explains both the two-headed cow as well as sodomy.

In addition to their respective ways of explaining exceptions to Nature’s rule, each vision had emphatically different ways of interpreting the continual change observable in all earthly substances. While change and motion are not key terms in the modern lexicon of ethicists, philosophers, and environmentalists who argue over the meaning of nature today, these terms were central to the medieval theological and scientific vocabulary of

nature, since they were regularly marshaled to explain not just physical phenomena but also sacramental mysteries (such as the Eucharist). On the transcendent view, natural change was defective mimesis. Since earthly nature is only a copy of a truer spiritual nature that exists elsewhere (Plato's forms), it is necessarily inferior to a divine realm imagined as immutable. The perfection toward which everything strives is imagined as stasis; movement is a sign that something lacks its true Form. Nature, in this view, is deficient to the degree that it is subject to change. For thirteenth-century Aristotelians, on the other hand, change had a more positive valence: it was the necessary condition of all creatures moving toward their final and most suitable forms. The capacious category of Aristotelian nature referred not just to the individual trees, flowers, and grizzly bears by which we are surrounded, but also to any body capable of motion. For Aristotle, *physis*, or nature, is an inner principle of change and rest.⁶⁴ Those things that possess their own principle of motion within were considered natural, while those that lacked an internal mover were not. If you plant a bed, it does not grow another bed; hence, a tree could claim to be natural while a bed could not. In the Aristotelian model, worker and work are the same: mutually present and immanent. All that is needed for creation is already within creation, and so processes of change and growth that seem to begin themselves are deemed natural. In the Neoplatonic model, by contrast, everything made by nature is artificial or artifactual. The generative process can only gesture toward nature, because "the nature" of something does not lie within it. Arguments over what is nature and what art would preoccupy scholastic natural philosophers and vernacular poets alike: Jean de Meun would activate this opposition in the *Roman de la Rose*, as would Chaucer in his *Parliament of Fowls* and the *Physician's Tale*.

To summarize: for writers prizing immanence, whether popular encyclopedists such as the author of the *Image du monde* or scholastics such as Albertus Magnus or Aquinas, nature was akin to an ax wielded by an artisan deity; it allowed for a connection between a causal creative force and its subsequent creation. Transcendent writers such as Alan of Lille and later conservative theologians such as Bonaventure found nature's ax to be simultaneously too dull and too sharp; it was incapable of cutting to the interpretive core of events that were only comprehensible in the fullness of revealed understanding *and* it was also too sharp, seeking ever finer gradations of meaning in events whose spiritual referents resisted such parsing. For the transcendent *vicaria*, earthly change is a form of representational corruption that even Nature's relentless minting and forging cannot amend. In the immanent version, sublunary motions—whether birth, death, or any movement in between—were all just cuts of the divine ax, evidence of the inherent purposiveness of created things. The most significant difference between these two conceptions of nature hinges on the role of necessity: in the immanent model, the ax cuts by necessity; the

transcendent model lacks most versions of necessity. Nature as a tool, whose power unfolds within and through the creative process, is one cause in a causal series whose ultimate origin is God, the final cause. As such, the ax is an integral part of the unfolding of the divine plan. This is similar to the way in which the movement of the sculptor's chisel (as an expression of the sculptor's knowledge of stonework) functions as an efficient cause in the creation of a work of art for Aristotle. The teleological end is always acknowledged in this model, which posits a causal interaction between deity and nature to achieve a single material effect. Conversely, in the transcendent model, the relation between the artisan deity and Nature is one of static hierarchy, with Nature always the inferior copy of an immaterial original. Nature is only deictic; it points to something beyond itself, a placeholder for a removed reality. Nature as agent, whether blacksmith or coin minter, directs the viewer's gaze simultaneously to the fallibility of the sensory world here below and to the unchanging perfection that is found beyond it. The most extreme versions of the transcendent reading of Nature suggest that, since Nature has left the built environment, inquiry into her secrets does not help the inquirer to ascend the ladder of spiritual truth. On this view, nature is actually an impediment to spiritual understanding, and sensory perception is a dangerous foundation on which to attempt understanding (as Alan's *De planctu naturae* makes clear). The opposite argument is implicit in a model that stresses the instrumentality of nature; natural philosophy is valid to the extent that it helps us to discern the patterns inherent in the material world, patterns established and executed by the divine hand. The perception of these patterns, through sensual experience, is a necessary part of attaining knowledge. As we will see in the following chapter, the problem of necessity is crucial for understanding Nature's allegorization in Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*. In attempting to refute Jean's vision of Nature several decades later, the fourteenth-century Cistercian Guillaume de Deguileville deploys the metaphor of the Ax of Nature, only to show that it is, in fact, a useless tool in comparison with the efficacy of grace.

These figures for nature—ladder, book, artisanal deputy, and ax—index wider debates that were taking place around the figure of Natura in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As miniaturizations, they distill the essential themes of larger rhetorical and political debates, whether those between cosmologists and encyclopedists over how best to render the world around us in words or between Augustinians and Aristotelians over how the earthly environment was related to the divine plan. Individual natural metaphors did not dictate a specific interaction of human and nonhuman, nor did they contain an essential meaning about the world; rather, they could be deployed strategically by a variety of writers espousing sometimes opposing worldviews. It was not that the Thomist immanent view affirmed inquiry into the natural world while the Augustinian transcendent view did

not. The sustained interest in natural philosophy by twelfth-century Neoplatonists such as William of Conches and Thierry of Chartres already suggested the validity of exploring the divine order *secundum physicam* before the widespread introduction of Aristotelian physical science into the university curriculum. The fact that such methodology made conservative theologians uneasy, as evidenced by William of St. Thierry's censure of William of Conches, alerts us to the fact that a mistrust of a reason grounded in natural necessity was only intensified by the introduction of Aristotle's science.⁶⁵ The complexities of the historical development suggest that a set of immanent figures for nature did not just replace a set of transcendent ones; while the twelfth century is acknowledged as the great age of the cosmologists and the next century the age of the encyclopedists, these writers all drew on a common stock of key metaphors for nature despite endowing these figures with a variety of meanings. The process of figuring nature was thus a demonstrably dialectical one, since the meaning of such metaphors was elaborated not just within the university, but in conversations that spanned "learned" and "lewd," across a variety of genres, from *summa* to encyclopedia to secular poetry. The figures were to remain in circulation throughout the remainder of the late medieval period, and, while these metaphors held sway, they influenced not just how nature was envisioned, but also how nature itself could be read.

Reading Nature and the Nature of Reading

As we have seen, Hugh of St. Victor associates a literal reading of the Book of Nature with the "natural man" who lacks the moral insight that would convert exterior signs into spiritual sense. This kind of reading is characteristic of the *illiterati* who see marks on a page but cannot recognize their meanings. So, too, Bonaventure warns that only theologians should attempt to read the Book of Nature, since natural philosophers, in focusing on the material traces of spiritual reality, fail to distinguish the true essence of things. For these transcendent writers, the meaning of Nature's "text" recedes before human cognition and must be pursued with the inner rather than the outer eye. We find a different model of how to read nature in writers who embrace a more Aristotelian view of the physical world. Thomas Aquinas believes that, since the "Book of God's Works" reflects the "Book of God's Words," to read the one is to read the other. While he acknowledges that scripture is forced to clothe divine knowledge in earthly metaphors due to the gap in our understanding, he emphasizes that it is the corporeal things themselves that make this knowledge possible, since all human knowledge comes from sensory perception. Comparing higher truths to things of this world allows the unlearned access to things that they would not otherwise understand.⁶⁶ If the transcendent version of reading nature

eschews the literal level of physical things as mere distraction, looking below surfaces for the truth, the immanent version, by contrast, embraces a serial mode of reading that incrementally builds upon what we see around us. Understanding is acquired through a step-by-step engagement with exterior signs rather than through a singular flash of inner illumination in which the reader is given access to the hidden depths of the text.

These medieval models of reading loosely anticipate recent debate in literary criticism over the relative merits of “symptomatic” as opposed to “surface” models of reading. In a recent issue of the journal *Representations* entitled “The Way We Read Now,” Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus argue that the symptomatic reading characteristic of psychoanalysis and Marxism insists on looking beyond the literal language of the text, which it then construes as “something latent or concealed.”⁶⁷ For such critics, including perhaps most influentially Fredric Jameson, “meaning is the allegorical difference between surface and depth; and the critic restores to the surface the history that the text represses” (5). Jameson assigns to the modern critic the interpretive role that transcendent writers had assigned to the medieval theologian. That symptomatic reading did not just begin with Freud and Marx is readily acknowledged by Best and Marcus, who cite Plato’s manifest influence on Gnostic and Pauline modes of interpretation. Surface reading, on the other hand, addresses what is “evident, perceptible, apprehensible in texts” (9). It does so with many ends in mind, including that of understanding how a text’s meaning actually lies within the text itself rather than seeing the text as purely deictic, pointing to an absent or hidden meaning that resides elsewhere.

In the medieval argument over how to read nature and the texts that represent it, we find more than a historical antecedent to the latest instantiation of this binary way of imagining reading. While Best and Marcus express anxiety over the charge that surface reading can be seen as potentially “politically quietist” (16), a consideration of how Aristotelians read nature witnesses its more radical possibilities. Mere description of surfaces—whether the contours of the physical environment, the properties of an animal, or reading on the literal level—was, for medieval Aristotelians, a potentially controversial act by the end of the thirteenth century, when its opposite number, symptomatic reading, had the full force of institutional orthodoxy at its back.

Returning to the medieval figuration of nature as a reading practice, then, allows us to see it as rhetoric and hermeneutics in action; metaphors exist in the world, not at a remove from it. We can see the stakes of these medieval modes of reading even more clearly when we consider what the transcendent model of reading nature embraced by Hugh of St. Victor and Bonaventure has in common with the symptomatic version of criticism as outlined by Best and Marcus. Hugh would most likely agree with Fredric Jameson that the real truths of a text, like the real truths of nature, “remain

unrealized in the surface of the text.”⁶⁸ For such writers, the world of appearances has to be approached with hermeneutical caution. It could not be spoken of directly, since it had nothing to teach directly. Christian commentators therefore spoke of the secrets of nature in terms of mythic *integumenta* (coverings) or *involucra* (veils). In a commentary on Martianus Capella’s *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, Bernard Silvestris distinguishes allegory from *integumentum*. The former, he claims, uses a historical narrative to cover a spiritual truth as in the case of scripture, while the latter covers true meaning with a fictitious narrative, as in philosophical exposition. *Integumentum* is particularly appropriate when discussing nature, whether the essence of the human soul or celestial properties, since this realm is inaccessible by a direct approach of the human intellect.⁶⁹ In order to understand Nature’s secrets—particularly the place of insensible phenomena within her regime—the interpreter must initially delve beneath mere surface appearance and then present his conclusions only under cover of mythical figures lest the unlearned or immoral man be privy to her secrets.

Modeled on a figurative reading process, the transcendent view of nature had identifiable corollaries in actual reading practices. In eschewing the causal mode of natural reason, this view is compatible with the medieval practice of a *lectio divina* that encourages the reader to meditate and engage affectively with a text rather than attempting to parse its themes according to logical chains of association.⁷⁰ Like the transcendent reading of the Book of Nature, *lectio divina* assumes that a reader’s hermeneutic success is predicated on the reader’s moral disposition; only a pure inner state would guarantee access to the inner meaning of the text. This model of reading assumes a somewhat static reader who, from the outset, is either capable or incapable of the moral struggle necessary to wrest meaning from a text. The successful semiotician was the wise man or woman who came to the text already prepared to meet its challenges.

It is not that transcendent writers are uninterested in or generally dismissive of external reality. However, such writers usually insist that such outsides only function allegorically or deictically. To return to Bonaventure’s *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, there we find him invoking the categories of quantity and quality that were characteristic of mid-thirteenth-century Aristotelianism:

Magnitudo autem rerum secundum molem longitudinis, latitudinis et profunditatis; secundum excellentiam virtutis longe, late et profunde se extendentis, sicut patet in diffusionem lucis; secundum efficaciam operationis intimae, continuae et diffusae, sicut patet in operatione ignis, manifeste indicat immensitatem potentiae, sapientiae et bonitatis trini Dei....
Multitudo vero rerum secundum diversitatem generalem,

specialem et individualement in substantia, in forma seu figura et efficacis ultra omnem humanam aestimationem manifeste trium praedictarum conditionum in Deo immensitatem insinuat et ostendit.⁷¹

(The greatness of things viewed in terms of their length, width, and depth; or seen in terms of the immense energy which extends in length, width, and depth as is clear in the way light is diffused; or seen in terms of the efficiency of their operations which are internal, continuous, and diffuse, as appears in the action of fire – all this clearly points to the immensity of the power, wisdom, and goodness of the triune God.... And the multitude of things in their general, particular, and individual diversity of substance, form or figure, and activity—which is beyond human estimation—manifestly points to and demonstrates the immensity of the three attributes in God mentioned above.)

In Aristotle's *Categories*, he posits substance as the fundamental category, one divided into genera and species; following substance, he prioritizes quantities, both continuous and discrete, as well as qualities. Bonaventure resituates this language in an eschatological context: the nature, size, and shape of earthly things all attest the immensity of God, a reality that is "beyond all human estimation." To know a thing's substance, qualities, and quantities is important insofar as these finite attributes all indicate the infinite nature of its creator. The physical traits direct us to a meaning that is below the surface, a locus of value that is elsewhere. This vision flattens earthly things into transcendental pointers that, lacking meaning in themselves, all point to the same thing: the unified reality of the Trinity. It goes without saying that this mode of quantification is not that of the later Merton Calculators. This is a mystical quantifying of properties that suggests the limitations of this hermeneutic enterprise, even as it affirms that, beyond the diversity of earthly appearances, lies the unchanging and timeless existence of God.

If the transcendent vision of nature encourages its audience to read semiotically for absent signifieds, immanent reading practices encourage the reader to read for inherent causes, to look for (and value) the marks of the ax. The immanent view of nature suggests that learning about nature allows the reader, whether of the world or of the text, to develop incrementally, to begin to understand spiritual truths through their corporeal markers and then to advance their understanding in successive waves. Encyclopedias such as the *Image du monde* and Bartholomeus Anglicus's *De proprietatibus rerum* (and its vernacular versions) imagine a reader who was educable rather than one who was destined for success or failure on the basis of an inner moral state often imagined as a providential given. Such *summae* take

up Aristotelian scientific principles of taxonomy and teleology as formal textual principles. According to John Trevisa, the fourteenth-century translator of Bartholomeus's encyclopedia, reading the material traces—the properties of things—leads to accurate knowledge about their essences. He gives a succinct account of how dividing an entity up into its constituent properties aids our spiritual understanding:

For þe propirtees of þinges folewyth þe substaunce, þe ordre
and þe distinnccioun of propirtees schal be ordeyned to ordir
and distinnccioun of þe substaunce þerof. By help of God þis
werk is compiled, profitable to me and on cas to opir þat
knowith nou3t þe kyndes and propirtees of þinges þat beth
toschift and isprad ful wide in bokes of holy seyntes and
philosophris, to vndirstonde redels and menynges of
scriptures and of writings þat þe holy gost hath i3eue
derkliche ihid and wrapped vndir liknes and fygures of
propirtees of þinges of kynde and craft.... For it is not possible
to oure witte to styte vp to þe contemplacioun vnmaterial of
þe ierarchies of heuene but by material ledinge þat longith
thereto.⁷²

If Aristotle was the “master of those who know” to some medieval writers, Bartholomeus was the “master of properties” or, alternately, the “master of kind.”⁷³ The idea that the outer properties or qualities of a thing arise necessarily from its inner substance expresses the immanent view that the essential core and, hence, meaning of a thing is found within it and around it—in its activity, development, and place in the world. For Bartholomeus and the writers whom he influenced, the nature of a thing follows from its substance, whether it is a material thing like a tree or an immaterial thing like an angel. If, for transcendent readers of Nature's book, the *vestigia* always point us elsewhere, for immanent readers, earthly things contain within themselves the divine causal design in which they fully participate. The visible world is not merely populated with “factory seconds,” degraded versions of an unavailable model. This is a teleological pattern in which the order and arrangement of the world—all of those magnitudes and multitudes—bespeak the higher design. Moreover, demonstrative reasoning about the operations of nature helps us to understand better the nuances of this design; physical signs are not univocal in reference to their spiritual signifiers.

This causal understanding of a natural world parsed “in substance and in property” was a common late medieval encyclopedic rhetorical strategy.⁷⁴ Trevisa's translation emphasizes the necessity of the orderly exposition of knowledge, an epistemological necessity insofar as it reflects the causal nature of the cosmos. Causal explanations can be applied to both nature and art alike—“kynde and craft”—and this analogy between the two is a further

property of the immanent view. Trevisa offers both a rationale for the (at times) daunting enumeration that will follow as well as a justification for explaining spiritual natures in terms of their earthly counterparts, a justification similar to that found in the *Image du monde*. The veil of earthly entities, the “propirtees of þinges,” is not a cover to be pulled aside revealing a transcendent truth; it is not the *vestigia* that serve to point us elsewhere as for the Victorines and Bonaventure. Instead, it is a “material ledinge”—a “clue” in its etymological sense of a “string”—that makes knowledge of analogous entities possible. In this image of nature, the human intellect is able to climb up (“stye up”) the *scala naturae* to the immaterial things above. Since the hierarchy of being (“substance”) and of natures (“propirtees”) is a necessarily causal one, parsing the world has an ethical and not just descriptive value. The scholastic practice of what Trevisa here calls “distincion” (division) allows a clearer view of the created world and, hence, a fuller perspective on the divine plan as reflected in that creation. Enumeration is a strategy for making the world more amenable to human understanding; if the world can be divided into discrete parts, it can be experienced in ways that allow the intellect to move up the epistemological escalator that conveys the close observer of earthly nature to the spiritual level above.

This formal taxonomy encouraged a particular mode of reading, one in which the reader would begin at the beginning and read all the way through. The opening of the *Image du monde* states that whosoever desires knowledge of this world in order to live well in this life, “si lise tout premierement et tout ordenéement, si qu’il ne lise riens avant, devant ce qu’il entendra bien ce qui est devant” (then let him read everything from the very beginning and all in order, so that he reads nothing until he has understood well that which has come before).⁷⁵ This union of natural and spiritual knowledge—which begins with God and the divine beings and then moves down the ladder of perfection—requires a sequential mode of reading sensible signs, favoring progressive learning over sudden anagogic insight. The success of this sequential reading depends on God’s ultimate presence as cause of nature, but it also depends on the individual reader’s mastery of *ordo*, the classifying of all branches of knowledge. While we usually think of taxonomy as a mode of classifying epistemological branches—whether Porphyrian trees or college basketball brackets—it can also be imagined as a mode of reception in the case of medieval popular encyclopedias that envisaged a reader who needed to be trained to read in such an orderly fashion. In a text such as the *Image* that describes the regular movement of the planets and their predictable influences on the sublunary world, readers are reminded as well that their reading should be similarly orderly and regular. This microcosmic reading is particularly important with natural philosophical material: it must be read serially because the cosmic order inherent in the Aristotelian world is based on cause and effect. Moreover, lay reading of this material needed to be done

in a sequential way so that the complementary relation between theology and natural philosophy—a relation argued for overtly in the *Image*—would always be apparent to the reader.

If medieval popular encyclopedias anticipated a continuous reader, one who read from start to finish, this expectation is at odds with the modern encyclopedic experience of entry “grazing.” Modern encyclopedias are designed for selective reading by a user intent on extracting bits of information on discrete topics, a reading practice encouraged by, and structurally reified in, digital databases such as Wikipedia. Any claim to have read an encyclopedia from A to Z (even when older print editions made such an undertaking possible) would arouse disbelief at the very least and, more probably, distrust. The encyclopedic reading outlined by the *Image* author may also be contrasted to the discontinuous reading practiced on the Bible and in liturgical contexts, a mode of reading outlined by Peter Stallybrass and others.⁷⁶ Attending to literal surfaces in a linear fashion would be seen to have no particular spiritual benefit in a transcendent hermeneutic world where meaning is often produced by the serendipitous connection, the striking or unexpected adjacency, through which the reader is surprised into previously hidden knowledge.

One may well argue that the contrasting modes of reading described here may be attributable to generic differences alone: symptomatic reading is the more appropriate choice for biblical and theological works, while serial reading is applied to secular texts and histories. Such differences are not simply dependent on genre and subject matter, however, since the encyclopedias conveyed sacred as well as secular wisdom in a single place. Moreover, these texts are further distinguished by rhetorical choices that reinforce either literal or symptomatic modes of reading. This immanent version of the dissemination and reception of physical science lent itself to rhetorical tropes that emphasized what is gained by approaching the natural world as something to be known serially. Encyclopedic texts such as the *Image* often invoke the proverbial saying the “workman is known by his works” (par les euvres connoist on l’ouvrier et comment il peut estre).⁷⁷ This adage is a frequent refrain in a text affirming that spiritual knowledge comes from knowledge of the visible created world. We find it again in the specific context of justifying Aristotelian natural philosophy by Chaucer’s contemporary Thomas Usk, who invokes it in the prologue to his *Testament of Love*: “Wherof Aristotle in the boke *De Animalibus* saythe to naturel phylosophers, ‘It is a great lykyng in love of knowynge their creatour and also in knowynge of causes in kyndely thynges.’ Consydred, forsoth, the formes of kyndly thinges and the shap, a great kyndely love me shulde have to the werkman that hem made. The crafte of a werkman is shewed in the werke.”⁷⁸ The idea that the spiritual shines through to reveal itself in the material suggests that the spiritual can be known by its visible signs. This proverb suggests the same immanent relation imagined in the metaphor of

an artisan deity wielding nature like an ax: the cuts made by the ax-nature at the carpenter's request demonstrate that the divine is intrinsic to the material, the material always exemplifying the divine. Usk's use of this trope is anticipated in scholastic culture by Albertus Magnus, who, in his *Quaestiones de animalibus* (1260), cites Aristotle as the *locus classicus* for the idea that God as the first cause is known through his effects. Aristotle believes that inquiry into "naturas animalium vilium" (the natures of base creatures) is licensed by the fact that "in eis relucet artificium primi creatoris, sicut opus statuifici relucet in statua.... Unde ex cognitione illorum animalium vilium possumus ascendere in cognitionem primae causae tamquam ab effectu ad causam" (the artifice of the first creator is reflected in them just as the work of the sculptor is reflected in his statue ... Thus from an understanding of these base animals we can ascend to knowledge of the first cause just as we ascend from effect to cause).⁷⁹ Albertus's commentary explicitly links the idea of knowing causes by their effects, of finding spiritual meaning in even the most abject material creatures. In both Albertus and Usk, the trope of knowing the workman by his work advocates progress around causal entailments: the reader, whether of Nature or of the book, can find the essence by following the material *vestigia* so disdained by Bonaventure. In doing so, the metaphor suggests a continuity of being and meaning, ontology and epistemology, between material and immaterial.

Transcendent writers, on the other hand, disavow this immanent mode of reading, claiming that it is impossible to know the spiritual through the earthly since material things have only symbolic or abstract relations to divine things. In emphasizing the limits of human knowledge, such writers instead favor the indescribability topos over the idea of knowing the workman through his works. In Alan of Lille, Nature herself announces these limits even as she asserts that she will surpass them. She prefaces the description of her own creative powers by highlighting the very condition of its impossibility within the scope of human reason: "rem indemonstrabilem demonstrabo, inextricabilem extricabo, quamvis ipsa nulli naturae obnoxialiter alligata, intellectus indaginem non expectans, nullius descriptionis posset signaculo sigillari" (I will demonstrate something indemonstrable, and extricate the inextricable, though it is a thing bound by no obedience to the natural order, will not allow the scrutiny of intellect, cannot be stamped with the seal of a single description).⁸⁰ This paradoxical variant of the inexpressibility topos refutes the encyclopedic claim that knowledge of the physical world, if it is adequately parsed and categorized, can lead to a better understanding of the divine. The impossible nature of this desire is conveyed in the oxymorons littering Nature's speech. Similar indescribability topoi are found in theological works that include sustained sections of natural scientific material, where it acts as a theological disclaimer. For instance, *The Prick of Conscience* (1340), an anonymous confessional treatise, includes a long passage describing the properties of

both earthly and heavenly worlds (ll. 7553–812). While it may appear to be a digression from the work’s penitential themes, the long description of the heavens serves to reinforce the idea that the physical world is a moralized manifestation of divine desire. This natural philosophical passage ends with a similar inexpressibility topos as that found in Alan of Lille. While the passage is too long to quote in full, it invokes the biblical assertion of the ineffability of God’s power of creation (1 Corinthians 2:9) to argue against our ability to know about the Word from the Works:

“Eghe moght never se, ne ere here,
Ne in-tylle mans hert com þe ioyes sere
Þat God has ordayned þare and dyght,
Tylle alle þat here lufes him ryght.”
Ffor swa mykelle ioy þare salle be,
Þat alle þe men of Cristianté,
If ilk ane war parfyte in clergy
In divinité and in astronomy,
In gemettry and gramer, and arte,
Couth noght gese bi þe thowsand parte,
Ne think in hert ne with tong neven,
Þe ioyes þat þan salle be in heven.⁸¹

The Prick of Conscience warns its readers that academic knowledge of the world is of a different kind (not just degree) than spiritual knowledge. Even as it describes the natural world, *The Prick of Conscience* refuses to speculate on its causes and actively discourages its readers from doing so, since man’s mind is incapable of fully comprehending the glory and intricacy of the divine plan.

While *The Prick of Conscience* rehearses many of the same points about the heavens that we find in the *Image du monde*, it is clearly more anxious about the status of this knowledge vis-à-vis its theological aims. We see this difference in the way that the *Image du monde* employs the inexpressability topos. Like *The Prick of Conscience*, the *Image* recites at length the properties of the heavens, concluding with an acknowledgment that it may be impossible to count all the stars. To this admission of the potential deficiencies of natural philosophy, however, is added a significant caveat: “Et toutes voies vous en dirons nous, ce que mieulz y poons penser” (But we will tell you all matters that we can well understand).⁸² This assertion grants the encyclopedic writer wide latitude to speak of both theological and natural philosophical truths. The idea that some truths are inaccessible to reason should not, in the encyclopedist’s view, negate those truths that are available to it. The *Image* justifies reading the signs of the physical world by asserting that it is acceptable to inquire into the causes of any visible phenomenon that does not infringe on what Chaucer would later call “goddess pryvetee”: “Mès de celes qui par nature sont faites en ciel et en terre peut bien li hons

enquerre aucune raisons, se il est de bon sens et il met son temps en clergie apprendre” (But man can well inquire into the reasons behind those things that are made by nature in the heavens and on earth, if he has a good intellect and takes the time to acquire the knowledge).⁸³ In this passage, the encyclopedic writer answers an unstated objection that the secrets of nature should remain veiled under *integumenta*. The author goes on to scold both the learned and unlearned who, for different reasons, would disdain the value of the material world as a pedagogical tool. Certain clerks at Paris are reproved for desiring only the title of “master” and who, lacking the proper knowledge themselves, would enviously harry others who sought it. Unlearned people, on the other hand, often mistrust natural knowledge out of ignorance, attributing demonic force to it, yet such a prejudice commits a grave error in slandering natural philosophy and its practitioners. As opposed to *The Prick of Conscience*, which disparages the learning of the arts curriculum (astronomy, geometry, grammar) as a potential avenue for understanding spiritual truth, the *Image* claims that such study is part of the divine plan, since God himself will set appropriate limits on this knowledge: “L’en set tout par astronomie, fors ce que Diex ne veult mie que l’en sache” (Those who know astronomy know all except for that which God desires them not to know).⁸⁴ The pursuit of natural philosophy with the aim of acquiring knowledge that benefits all is then contrasted favorably with an individual’s desire merely to acquire money and material goods. Natural philosophy is championed in the name of the common profit against those who would learn only in pursuit of their own singular enrichment.

Passages of natural philosophical knowledge were common to many medieval genres, from hagiography to dream visions to encyclopedias, but their authors expressed a wide range of attitudes regarding the moral value of this learning as well as how nature itself could best be interpreted. The compiler of the *Image du monde* champions natural knowledge as valuable both to the community and to the individual Christian. Just as form is inherent within matter, for Aristotelian writers, meaning is immanent in the visible surfaces of things that disclose the key to their own operations. The author of *The Prick of Conscience*, on the other hand, includes long passages of natural description, but worries that focusing too much on the created world risks ignoring the providential reality of the Creator. In transcendent models of reading, meaning lies outside of texts, just as the essence of a thing is found in an absent God, never in the thing itself. Despite these differing viewpoints, both sets of writers imagined nature in human terms and depended on a shared set of analogies and rhetorical tactics to make their arguments, a way of figuring nature that was to fall decidedly out of favor in subsequent centuries.

While metaphors such as the Book of Nature and the *scala naturae* do not disappear in the early modern period, the visions of nature that they embodied begin to fall out of favor. Empiricists such as Francis Bacon denounced the scholastic tendency to figure nature in anthropomorphizing ways, claiming that it risked distorting environmental processes by installing human fictions where, by right, nature should be. At the same time that humanism was arguing for man as a more central measure of political and ethical rectitude, his role as the yardstick against which nature was to be measured was diminishing. While scholars are familiar with this narrative from the Scientific Revolution, it is also important to consider more recent episodes of the antifigurative turn. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, the historian William Cronon objects to the Romantic metaphors that first redefined wilderness as a space of the sublime, a sacred place of inhuman beauty, and then subsequently licensed the exploitation of that space, domesticating the “mountain cathedrals” of the West into the frontier equivalent of the suburban strip mall.⁸⁵ This concern about the rhetorical violence inherent in natural tropes has become a defining characteristic of more recent posthumanist writings on the possibilities of representing nature. By way of conclusion, I will attend briefly to the postmedieval fate of the hylozoist analogy for nature: On what basis are these metaphors disallowed both in the early modern period and in more recent environmental criticism? Why does the rejection of natural metaphor become, in effect, a recursive trope of modernity itself?

Historians of science have documented how seventeenth-century natural philosophers began to dismiss the human-scaled physics of their predecessors, as popular medieval metaphors like the Book of Nature were found to be inadequate to the rhetorical needs of a “New Science” seeking to erect firmer barriers between man and the rest of the natural world. It was not that early modern empiricists eschewed metaphors altogether. As Steven Shapin has pointed out, they just rejected those metaphors that asserted a teleology common to the human and nonhuman worlds: “All seventeenth-century mechanical accounts set themselves in opposition to the tradition that ascribed to nature and its components the capacities of purpose, intention, or sentience.”⁸⁶ Gone were metaphors that imagined substantive interaction between the natural and the human: nature was no longer a ladder to be climbed, a book to be read, or a tool to be wielded. In place of these metaphors were to be found mechanical comparisons that subsumed an active human role under an ostensibly autonomous product of human artifice: nature was now imagined as a clock; the heart, a mechanical pump. “It was a widespread seventeenth-century sentiment,” as Shapin explains, “that humans can securely know only what they themselves construct by hand or model by mind.”⁸⁷ Nature as allegorized human activity was out;

machines were in.

Even as many early modern writers switched from anthropomorphizing metaphors of nature to mechanical ones, others decried using figural language to describe nature altogether, attempting to cleanse extraneous rhetorical “ornament” from the language of scientific demonstration. Most famously, the theologian and philosopher Thomas Sprat, author of the *History of the Royal Society* (1667), announced his intention to “separate the knowledge of Nature from the colours of Rhetorick.”⁸⁸ For Sprat, scientific discourse was as much in need of reform as was the old religion; just as medieval ecclesiastics misled believers as to the true nature of scripture, so too scholastic natural philosophers obscured physical truths through their rhetorically ornate language: “Who can behold without indignation how many mists and uncertainties these specious *Tropes* and *Figures* have brought on our Knowledge?”⁸⁹ Sprat’s indignation may have been shared by other seventeenth-century empiricists, but it did not prevent them from regularly employing such tropes and figures in their own writing, as Brian Vickers has noted in his contextualization of these antirhetorical sentiments. Despite this gap between rhetoric and reality, the rejection of metaphor, though largely unattained and unattainable, was nonetheless an announced aspirational ideal in the Scientific Revolution.⁹⁰

If some seventeenth-century writers perceived danger in the overly humanizing metaphors of the scholastics, this early modern suspicion of figuring *physis* finds a different, but related, expression in the emphatic rejection of such analogizing tendencies by modern environmentalists and posthumanist critics alike. These writers are understandably wary of metaphors of nature, whether those that originated in the Middle Ages, the Enlightenment, or the Romantic period. In his book *Ecology Without Nature*, the literary critic Timothy Morton argues that the danger in modern nature writing is its attempt to portray nature as it “really is.” In presenting nature as a thing “out there,” a thing to be sought, idealized, consumed, or represented—in effect, a transcendental other to the human—we distort our relation to the environment. He suggests instead that we practice a “dark ecology” that “undermines the naturalness of the stories we tell about how we are involved in nature.”⁹¹ It is only by attending to the gap between the human imagined as always a subject with respect to the object of nature that we can begin to see the effect of our troubled relation with the environment and begin to fashion a new relation to it. Morton’s perceptive comments on the legacy of Romantic views of nature are, like the writings of William Cronon and Donna Haraway, a necessary reminder of the dangers of what Morton calls “ecomimesis,” the tendency to create “another nature” in realist representations of the landscape.

Significantly, metaphors and taxonomies of nature have been the collateral damage in this recent drive to “denature” our relation to the natural world. Morton argues passionately for the obsolescence of such

metaphors, indignantly asserting that “Nature is not a mirror of our mind.”⁹² In the same vein, the critic Rosi Braidotti laments the pervasiveness of a particular subset of natural metaphors, claiming that animal metaphors such as those found in bestiaries are oppressive to the “zooproletariat” because they install hierarchical boundaries between the human and nonhuman: “Animals are not functional parts in teleological taxonomies, nor are they metaphors: they partake rather in an ethology of forces and of speeding metamorphoses.”⁹³ Braidotti suggests that a recognition of what we share with animals would preclude such figurative violence. If classification and figurative language have been an essential feature of discussing nature from the medieval to the modern eras, these habits of thought have also been blamed for promoting a wrong-headed and destructive idea of human exceptionalism. Taxonomical thinking is not just critically unfashionable but also morally suspect in a modern ecological conversation largely based on a Deleuzo-Guattarian model of a rhizomatic nature whose hallmarks are fluidity, interdependency, and interspecies intimacy. This mistrust is summed up by the environmental critic Lorraine Code: “Entities, organisms, and events do not fall naturally into categories and kinds; and classifications are multiply contestable. Nor, because it yields no understanding of interrelations among (classifiable) organisms, geography, climates, and/or human beings, can taxonomy be an end in itself or pinpoint an incontestable given.”⁹⁴ Code’s point, pace Foucault, that any classification is an interpretation and that such classifications can be naturalized for ideological ends is well taken. The further point, that taxonomy in and of itself is suspicious, assumes that it is a crude, phallogentric tool, an unrefined, totalizing view of the world that enforces an inside-outside manifold operating through various schemes of exclusion. The idea that the natural world is indescribable or not amenable to taxonomic interpretation ironically aligns modern critics such as Code both with those medieval transcendent writers who were suspicious of the Aristotelian habit of parsing nature and with the seventeenth-century Thomas Sprat who mistrusted analogy more generally.

A similar suspicion of taxonomy motivates environmental theorists who prefer flat ontological systems to the taxonomic ones privileged in the medieval period. These critics often appeal to materiality itself as the license for a “horizontal” ontology, one that blurs the boundaries not just between species but between the living and the nonliving. The political scientist Jane Bennett, for instance, sees this horizontality of relations as a way of creating greater empathy between the human and everything else: “Materiality is a rubric that tends to horizontalize the relations between humans, biota and abiota. It draws human attention sideways, away from an ontologically ranked Great Chain of Being and toward a greater appreciation of the complex entanglements of humans and nonhumans.”⁹⁵ In Bennett’s account, the Great Chain of Being suppresses the types of affiliations that modern

critics seek to reveal. Her assumptions about how the *scala naturae* operates would only be true of its transcendent version—the one that enforces rigid breaks between steps—and not of the immanent, Aristotelian model that suggests similar intimacies between the living and the nonliving. Like Bennett, Timothy Morton advocates for a different understanding of nature that emphasizes its nonteleological capacity for becoming: “life-forms constitute a *mesh*, a nontotalizable, open-ended concatenation of interrelations that blur and confound boundaries at practically any level: between species, between the living and the nonliving, between organism and environment.”⁹⁶ For Morton, the mesh, again like the Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizome or Bennett’s conception of a “vibrant” materiality, is an antidote to the hierarchical, exclusionary vision of traditional natural taxonomies. Taxonomy has thus become the collateral damage in this recent drive to “denature” our relation to the natural world in a critical conversation that assumes the network as its basis.

If modern environmental critics often insist on the radical difference between rhizomatic ways of thinking about being and taxonomical ones, it is critically useful to remind ourselves of what they have in common. Both marshal description as a hermeneutic. As the historian of science Peter Dear reminds us, for the Aristotelian, “knowing how to classify and name things functioned ... as an alternative means to that of mechanical explanation for rendering them intelligible.”⁹⁷ We might argue that, for the environmental critic, describing networks provides an alternative to scientific modes of description that are themselves a legacy of earlier physical systems. Moreover, a “mesh of nature” is just as much a taxonomy as a ladder or a book of nature. Every metaphor or taxonomy enables us to see some things more clearly, even as it obscures or suppresses others. The “mesh of nature” reveals the mutual influence and intimacy of biological relations even as it fails to explain either the origins of asymmetrical complexity or how change occurs in such a system of “liquid life.” To claim that there is no hierarchy of classes of actors is itself an ideological claim and one that needs to be examined. Each solves a particular aspect of the philosophical question surrounding human exceptionalism at the expense of others.

Having aired the modern distrust of natural metaphor and taxonomy, it is useful to conclude by returning briefly to the premodern hylozoist metaphors of nature in order to consider why it was that these taxonomies were found to be especially generative at that particular historical moment. One doubtless appeal was touched on earlier: their mobility. Ideologically fluid, they were available to writers of many theological and representational persuasions as a way to make man’s relationship to nature intelligible. For transcendent Augustinians such as Alan of Lille and Bonaventure, analogy was the only way nature could be understood due to the limited scope of human understanding. For immanent Aristotelians such as Aquinas and thirteenth-century encyclopedists, analogy best explained

the complicated causal chains linking natural and human processes of development. An individual metaphor did not perform the straightforwardly “transcendentalizing” and “dematerializing” work ascribed to them by modern critics, since they did not all endorse a unitary discourse about nature’s moral authority. Moreover, for immanent writers these metaphors performed particularly critical work. Far from being merely ornamental, such metaphors functioned as a kind of anti-definition, allowing writers with Aristotelian sympathies to explain things that were otherwise imagined to be impossible to explain within the theological strictures under which mythographic nature had been conceived. Significantly, these figures allow for shared properties among ontological categories in writers who imagined the boundaries between animate and inanimate creatures as more permeable than did succeeding Enlightenment thinkers. It is certainly the case that the medieval attitude toward nature was more overtly hierarchical and instrumental than our own (though it is worth noting that the idea of nature as a resource to be plundered would await the Renaissance).⁹⁸ Medieval writers were, almost to a one, human exceptionalists with regard to the operations of reason and memory (a view that still has not insignificant adherents among scientists as well as laypersons). However, the immanent versions of metaphors such as the *scala naturae* and the Book of Nature did admit many intriguing ontological continuities that modern physical and biological theories foreclose. In illustrating ordinary occurrences visible to the senses (acorns becoming oaks) rather than exceptions to them (vacuums in air pumps; dark matter in the Large Hadron Collider), these teleological metaphors operated in the world of the everyday rather than in the fascinating but rarified world of veiled counterfactuals. Neither were they forced, as are some modern environmental critics, to ignore the very real differences entailed by varying levels of ontological complexity. Neither consciousness nor speech nor rational capacity nor extended memory can be a compelling rationale for human dominion over the rest of nature, but neither can their collective presence be absolutely discounted as a marker of different shades of being.

An examination of the histories of these natural metaphors demonstrates that, like their modern counterparts, a significant number of medieval writers who employed them were concerned with the question of the place of the human as well as the nature of human will as worked out in the material world. Metaphors of nature, comparisons between the human and the nonhuman, are not themselves necessarily exceptionalist or coercive, though they could (and do) lend themselves to such arguments. The recovery of this rhetorical history is essential for understanding how taxonomy as a heuristic for making nature make sense continues to influence relations between the human and the nonhuman, the body and the world, even within a current ecological conversation largely framed as antitaxonomic.

Rather than merely denouncing the impulse to classify or analogize, it

would be more useful to acknowledge the widespread allure of such forms of thought and then to analyze the far-reaching consequences of such taxonomies. Discussions of metaphor by philosophers and linguists have begun to try to map out how metaphors structure wider social interactions in ways that can help us return to the generative aspects of medieval natural descriptions. The foundational work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson is still relevant here. In arguing for the pervasiveness of metaphor, they reserve a particular place for metaphors that describe the relation of the human to the natural world: “The natural question to ask, then, is whether people actually think and act in terms of consistent sets of metaphors. A special case where they do is in the formulation of scientific theories, say, in biology, psychology, or linguistics. Formal scientific theories are attempts to consistently extend a set of ontological and structural metaphors.”⁹⁹ While the metaphors of nature discussed in this chapter may not qualify as “formal scientific theories” in the modern sense that Lakoff and Johnson intend in this passage, they were its natural philosophical equivalent, the tools through which a coherent accounting of nature was fashioned. This mode of comparing purposive change in both living and nonliving bodies was seen as valuable because it performed interpretive work that could not be achieved by other hermeneutic means. It was not just that the premodern period lacked the mathematical chops to quantify nature; approaching nature through figurative language was seen to offer a precise instrument for demonstrating the interconnectedness of the processes of generation and change, an interlaced narrative that quantification alone—that other recursive trope of modernity—could not convey.

If, as I have argued above, one of the regular targets of seventeenth-century polemicists was the medieval penchant for imagining natural processes in terms of human activity, this dangerous tropological habit was usually attributed by early modern critics to either Aristotle himself or the pernicious interpretations of his work by scholastics. When Aristotle imagines natural causation in terms of the processes of house building, bronze casting, or the art of healing, his early modern critics complained that these were inappropriately psychological models of how nature works. Francis Bacon charged Aristotle with the crime of substituting rhetorical categories for observation of earthly things; according to Bacon, “Aristotle’s *Physics* rings out with little more than the terms of dialectic.”¹⁰⁰ Yet it was precisely these human-scaled ways of seeing the world that made Aristotelian natural philosophy so appealing to many late medieval thinkers. In the next chapter, I move from the individual rhetorical processes that allowed both learned and popular writers to imagine their environment (and the truths that could be known from it) to the source of many of these analogies: Aristotle, imagined both as a historical personage (the Greek philosopher whose translated work became the basis for the late medieval

arts curriculum) and as a potentially dangerous source of naturalist heresy (the pagan who embraced the eternity of the world and rejected the immortality of the soul).

CHAPTER 2

Neoplatonic works (such as *De causis*) and natural philosophical spuria (such as *De mineralibus* and *De physiognomia*).² Aristotle was the obvious cultural authority on issues ranging from diet to bloodletting to prudent governance to the status of logical propositions. And yet, by the middle of the thirteenth century, a particular segment of Aristotelian science—his views on the nature of the created world, necessity, and how the soul was related to the body that housed it—would come under more intense scrutiny and would eventually lead to the condemnation of certain aspects of his natural philosophy in university circles.

This chapter is concerned with one particularly powerful aspect of Aristotle's continued presence in late medieval intellectual culture: his status as a touchstone within debates about the limits of natural reason, debates that were themselves the product of the thirteenth-century conflict over how to interpret nature. Specifically, it argues that biographical accounts of Aristotle became one venue in which a vexing philosophical controversy acquired its distinctively late medieval coloring. While the debate was, at times, quite textured, the conflict could be understood, in general terms, as a struggle between an Augustinian and an Aristotelian conception of nature's intelligibility and didactic moral value. Whether or not sensory knowledge could be trusted—itself a vast controversy—depended on whether one believed, with Augustine that nature was a veiled expression of divine will and therefore impervious to the gaze of the natural philosopher, or with Aristotle that nature's regularity manifested an ethical system that could lead the sensitive observer to moral truths.³ While acknowledging that the labels "Augustinian" and "Aristotelian" are imperfect and, indeed, largely the product of historians of science writing in the first half of the twentieth century, they are nonetheless useful for discussing the philosophical and theological pressures that were at work in the well-known censure of certain natural philosophical tenets in the 1270s by representatives of the Augustinian orthodoxy. Even as historians continue to debate the censure's specific effects, they agree that it was a defining event in premodern conflicts over the status of nature within human and divine knowledge and that its terms would have been recognizable to participants in roughly this form.⁴ This condemnation—and the distinctions in which it participated—would, I argue, have equally far-reaching consequences on the field of medieval literary production, as poets, historians, and moralists argued over how best to represent the material world around them.

If the metaphors of nature discussed in the preceding chapter charted shifting attitudes toward nature's moral authority up to the middle of the thirteenth century, those shifts would lead to outright polarization in the second half of that century. That conflict, and the terms in which it played out, is the subject of this chapter, which recounts the odyssey of Aristotle as a natural philosophical Everyman. This story takes the form of a peripatetic morality play: If the world was created by a being with infinite powers and

knowledge, what could the faculties of a finite being—even a man such as Aristotle, who was regularly referred to as the “rule of Nature”—reveal about nature’s governing principles? The drama was played out most spectacularly in stories of Aristotle’s death. These narratives appear in universal histories, scholastic *quaestiones*, and even a deathbed dialogue circulating in both academic and extra-academic contexts that purported to document the philosopher’s last words. The opening of this chapter compares these generically disparate texts, arguing that the philosopher’s demise becomes a matter of intense theological concern only from the mid-thirteenth century onward. This was a time of increasing disagreement over whether it was possible to accommodate certain Aristotelian philosophical principles to Christian orthodoxy. The failure to reconcile these positions is marked by the 1277 condemnation that sought, *inter alia*, to censure a number of Aristotelian interpretations of the material world, a document issued by university officials in Paris but promptly echoed by those in Oxford. After 1277, discussion of Aristotle’s death and posthumous fate carried greater weight: his medieval avatar would star, sometimes as hero, sometimes as villain, in this ongoing dramatization of whether man’s senses can help him grasp whatever truths were to be found in the created world. The remainder of the chapter explores how Aristotle’s death reframes the story about the compatibility of pagan learning and Christian doctrine, a narrative fraught with anxieties about continuities between East and West. In these popular writings, biographical debate over Aristotle the man was also often debate about the reach of his natural philosophy and about its reception by a medieval culture eager for his learning but wary of its vehicle.

Aristotle’s Death

Arguments about the value of Aristotle’s scientific learning inevitably colored accounts of his life, such as those found in collections of *vitae* that were a staple of late medieval encyclopedias and histories. It is in the accounts of his death, however, that moral judgments about the usefulness of this learning are most clearly on display. We find a vivid example of differing attitudes toward Aristotelian natural philosophy in the argument that erupts between a fourteenth-century English translator and his Latin source. Ralph Higden’s *Polychronicon* (ca. 1342–44) is a compilation of chronicles and general knowledge that was arguably the most popular universal history in medieval Britain.⁵ Higden’s work was translated into English in 1387 by the prolific translator John Trevisa, who was also responsible for translating both Bartholomeus Anglicus’s expansive encyclopedia *De proprietatibus rerum*, a work that incorporated much material from the *libri naturales* into its theological framework, and Giles of Rome’s *De regimine principum*, a treatise on good governance drawing

largely from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*.⁶ On the basis of these translations, Trevisa was to become the major avenue for the transmission of Aristotle's philosophical learning in English before the Renaissance.

In his translation of the *Polychronicon*, Trevisa stages a conspicuous marginal argument with his source over how exactly Aristotle was supposed to have died, criticizing the veracity of Higden's sources as well as the earlier historian's interpretation of them. Higden's version of Aristotle's life begins by praising the philosopher for his supremacy in rhetoric and logic, but notes that, nonetheless, some men considered him to be the devil's son ("incubi daemonis filium").⁷ Higden does not explain the slander on Aristotle's conception, making only vague mention that "some men" believe the philosopher to be vain and proud. It is only later in the narration of Aristotle's ostensible death that the source of this hubris becomes clear. According to Higden, Aristotle dies during a visit to the Strait of Euripus, a narrow sea with unique tides that continually ebb and flow. Pondering this unnatural tidal phenomenon and failing to divine its cause, Aristotle shouts at the water in his frustration: "Quia non possum capere te, capies me" (Because I cannot understand you, take me), whereupon he drowns himself.⁸ The pithy parallelism of Aristotle's ostensible last words, with their play on the verb *capere*, underscores the philosopher's intellectual vanity, one that derives from his immoderate desire for knowledge of the natural order and that ultimately leads him to the sin of despair. Higden's account also suggests that the pagan's demonic origins are typologically fulfilled in his suicidal end. In doing so, Higden gives voice to late medieval unease about the repercussions of Aristotle's natural writings, unease that stems from a belief that some earthly phenomena are, and should always remain, inaccessible to human reason.

Writing about four decades after Higden, Trevisa's translation of this passage resists Higden's account of Aristotelian *acedia* in a marginal note, recuperating Aristotle the man and validating a scientific interest in the material world. First, Trevisa indignantly insists that Aristotle *did* understand the ebbing and flowing of unnatural tides and, second, he provides an alternate ending for the philosopher's life to that provided by Higden and his source, the patristic writer Gregory of Nazianzus. Trevisa questions what would have led a writer of Gregory's stature to assert such a foolish version of Aristotle's death:

Trevisa. It is wonder þat Gregorius Nau3an3enus telleþ so made a ungoodly tale of so worþy a prince of filosofres as Aristotil was. Why telleþ he nou3t how Aristotil declareþ nou3t þe mater of ebbynge and flowing of þe see, 2º Meth.? Why telleþ he nou3t how it is i-write in þe book of þe appel how Aristotel deyde and hylde an appel in his hond and

hadde comfort of þe smyl and tau3te his scoleres how þey
schulde lyve and come to God, and be wiþ god wiþ outen
ende. And at þe laste his hond gan to quake, and þe appel fil
doun of his hond, and his face wax al wan, and so Aristotil
3elde up þe goost and deyde. Pan it foloweþ in þe storie.⁹

Trevisa's addition argues, contra Higden, that Aristotle dies, not alone on a seashore, but surrounded by his students. Smelling the apple, he finds God in its fragrance and dies in the peace of this knowledge. Trevisa's addition to his source is unusual, since his characteristic interpolations merely explain Latinate terms presumably unfamiliar to his vernacular audience. In this passage, however, his lengthy aside approaches rhetorical high dudgeon ("Why telleþ he nou3t ...? ... Why telleþ he nou3t ...?"), as Trevisa marshals one of Aristotle's own natural philosophical texts, *De meteorologica*, as evidence against Higden's account of his demise. The apple symbolism, moreover, shows Aristotle to be a regenerate Eve, one whose search for natural knowledge unites him with the divine. In Trevisa's version, Aristotle's death is no longer an exemplum against natural philosophy; instead, it affirms a route through the senses to the spiritual.

Two judgments on Aristotelian natural philosophy clash in this marginal battle between Trevisa and his source: the former sees philosophy as the earthly predecessor of divine knowledge, while the latter doubts that knowledge of the order of natural things can ever bring one closer to God. If Trevisa rewards Aristotle with a good death, Higden portrays the Greek philosopher as succumbing to the dangerous effects of too great a desire for empirical knowledge. For Higden and his Franciscan sources, peering too closely into Nature's secrets is potentially fatal, and, in a typically medieval moment of narrative *contrapasso*, their Aristotle meets his death by science.

In his refutation of this suicidal narrative, Trevisa calls upon the authority of "þe book of þe appel," a work that the English translator claims as more authoritative even than Higden's saintly source, Gregory of Nazianzus. Trevisa's Middle English phrase refers to an apocryphal text known as *De pomo sive de morte Aristotilis* (*The Apple or Aristotle's Death*) (Figure 2). This text purports to be a dialogue between the mortally ill Aristotle and his disciples who arrive at his bedside to hear his final words, a scene that gestures self-consciously toward the deathbed symposium of Socrates described in the *Phaedo*. In *De pomo*, the disciples arrive to find Aristotle extolling the life-prolonging scent of an apple: "nisi esset hoc pomum quod in manu mea teneo et quod odor suus me confortat et aliquantulum prolongat vitam meam, iam expirassem" (were it not for this apple which I hold in my hand and whose odor comforts me and prolongs my life a while longer, I would have already expired).¹⁰ Refreshed, the philosopher is able to lecture his students on the proper use of the senses, the created nature of the world, and the immortality of the soul. *De pomo*

constructs a sympathetic, Christian-friendly Aristotle, one whose disciples can commend him to God when he dies: “Ille qui recolligit philosophorum animas, tuam recolligat animam et reponat eam in thesauris suis, sicut dignum est reponi animam hominis directi et perfecti sicut tu es” (may he who gathers the souls of philosophers gather your soul and keep it among his treasures, as befits the soul of an upright and perfect man such as you are).¹¹ While the treatise does not assert the ultimate Christian salvation of the philosopher, at the very least, it acts as a strong letter of recommendation on his behalf.

Though little discussed today, *De pomo* was, according to Charles Schmitt, widely circulated in its day; it was the most popular pseudo-Aristotelian work of the European Middle Ages after the *Secretum secretorum*.¹² It enters the mainstream of Latin university culture in the mid-thirteenth century, when it was translated from the Hebrew, which had in turn been translated from an even earlier Arabic version. The few modern critics who have been interested in *De pomo* have discussed it as an example either of the spurious transmission of Greek scientific knowledge through Arabic sources into the Latin West or of medieval debates about the salvation of the just pagan.¹³ Unremarked in these discussions is the fact that the treatise speaks directly to the contentious thirteenth-century debate between theology and natural philosophy over the status of empirical knowledge as a conduit to the divine. In my discussion of that debate, I will employ the terms “theology” and “natural philosophy” as shorthand to mark the positions of, respectively, those (usually) Augustinian writers who believed that natural reason could add little to the insights of faith and those Aristotelians who (usually) believed that such reason could lead to concrete, if necessarily limited, understandings of the divine plan. These are not absolute designations by any means; the boundary between these positions was porous to the extent that scholastic writers all had vested interest and training in both fields. However, the fact that the designations *clericus* and *philosophus* overlapped should not be allowed to obscure the manifest tensions around such self-identifications as they developed over the course of the thirteenth century.¹⁴ Whereas Trevisa’s fourteenth-century disagreement with his historiographical source is one (relatively late) example of this tension, *De pomo* is an earlier and more significant one. Evidence for this assertion can be found in several distinct places, including its internal representation of Aristotle and his beliefs, the circumstances of *De pomo*’s translation into Latin, and, finally, the treatise’s subsequent reception in the later Middle Ages.



FIGURE 2. Opening of *De pomo*. Schlatt, Eisenbibliothek, MS 20, fol. 15v.
Reproduced by permission of the Eisenbibliothek.

By asking whether it is possible to smell your way to salvation, *De pomo* urges its reader to imagine a pathway from the senses to spiritual redemption. *De pomo*'s Aristotle vehemently affirms the supremacy of natural philosophy and demands that his students do the same. Early in the dialogue he quizzes his students catechistically:

"In primis interrogabo vos si confitemini et creditis in scientia philosophie, que continet omnes scientias, quod est vera; et qui inquit eam inquit veritatem et rectitudinem et gradus altissimos et divinos, et per eam est differentia inter hominem et alia animalia?" Qui dixerunt: "Velimus nolimus, confitemur sic esse."

("First I will ask if you avow and believe in the discipline of philosophy which contains all sciences, that it is true; and that he who seeks after it searches for truth and rectitude in the highest and most divine degrees? And in it is to be found the difference between man and the other animals?" They said, "Whether we like it or not, we confess this to be so.")¹⁵

Like many a teacher before and after him, *De pomo*'s Aristotle remains undeterred by his students' apparent lack of enthusiasm and perseveres with a disquisition on the value of learning *secundum physicam*, asserting that the wise man who would wish to know his creator should look to the created

world, should “considerare opera celorum et sapientiam suam, cursusque sperarum et formas earum” (consider the work of the heavens and its wisdom and the courses of the spheres and their forms).¹⁶ If he is not wise enough to understand such abstract phenomena, he should simply look down at his own body wherein the same patterns are to be found. While the treatise vigorously affirms the study of material phenomena as a path to spiritual truths, it also attempts, with limited success, to reconcile an empirical interest in looking at the natural world with the Christian imperative to look beyond it.

De pomo asserts that the smell of the apple is what keeps Aristotle alive, and yet the treatise repeatedly denounces the vileness and fallenness of the body that houses that sense of smell: the world is a sinful mire, the body a filthy prison. Earlier in *De pomo*, Aristotle had claimed that wisdom can only arise once the soul has been purged, “quando recedit de immunditia que est cum ea incarcerationa et contrahitur ex terra, et non querit delectationes corporis in commensationibus et potationibus et delectationibus ad instar aliorum animalium” (when it abandons the uncleanness that is imprisoned with it and which is drawn from the earth, and when it does not seek delights of the flesh in eating, drinking, and amusements like other animals do).¹⁷ Aristotle repeatedly describes the material body as the soul’s trap, even as he exalts the restorative power of the apple on his senses. The treatise’s emphasis on bodily temperance, the overcoming of the prison house of the body, can be read as a sign of the rhetorical tightrope it walks: valorize the senses as an epistemological instrument but condemn them as a gateway to the sins of gluttony and even, potentially, *acedia*. The emblematic gesture of Aristotle smelling the apple is one that embodies this tension: the philosopher seeks to use the apple as a spiritual lens, but he must look through the apple to God, not allowing his gaze to be arrested by the material apple itself. As Susan Harvey has argued in a different context, the olfactory experience itself was a powerful emblem for the divine-human encounter; for instance, smelling incense during worship was thought to open up a route for the believer to participate in the transcendent. While the setting of *De pomo* is decidedly pre-Christian, its representation of the apple’s smell functions in a similar way as the smell of incense would for the early Christian described by Harvey: as “a symbol that became the vehicle for its own realization,” the apple’s scent allows the pagan philosopher to participate in divinely revealed knowledge in a way that would be otherwise impossible given that he lived before the Incarnation.¹⁸ In both cases, olfactory experience functions as a point of contact with the divine.

The conflict between an Aristotelian validation of the senses and a recurring Neoplatonic metaphor of the carcerality of the flesh, while symptomatic of the classical intellectual schism that exists between the two Greek philosophers, also speaks pointedly to the growing thirteenth-century concern over the incompatibility between Aristotle’s natural philosophy and

biblical truth. In 1231, a papal commission had been charged with determining whether the *libri naturales* contained errors and, if so, with expurgating them.¹⁹ *De pomo* neatly resolves the compatibility problem by having the philosopher himself disavow his most problematic statements. Whereas the historical Aristotle had regularly asserted both the eternity of the world and the finite nature of the human soul—one that is necessarily related to the material body in which it is housed—*De pomo*'s Aristotle frequently affirms both the ex nihilo creation of the world by God and the posthumous existence of the soul.²⁰ *De pomo* thus presents a syncretic Aristotle whose rough, pagan edges have been filed down; those aspects of Aristotle's science that conflicted with Christian doctrine have been silently amended. In these ways, *De pomo* differs not just from recognized Aristotelian positions taken in the *Physics* and elsewhere, but also from *De pomo*'s own Arabic source.²¹

The treatise's nervousness over potentially heretical Aristotelian doctrines may be one clue as to why it was translated into Latin at the moment that it was and why it circulated so widely and in so many different contexts. While the treatise had been available in an Arabic version from at least the tenth century, and in a Hebrew version from earlier in the thirteenth century, it was only translated into Latin in 1255 at the court of King Manfred of Sicily.²² Manfred was known for his keen interest in natural philosophy and had sponsored disputations at his court on subjects such as the nature and function of the body's limbs.²³ As in most cases of textual transmission, the gap between its appearance two centuries earlier in Arabic and its somewhat belated appearance in Latin, several decades after the translation of most of Aristotle's works on natural philosophy, is significant. The initial translation of *De pomo* at this time and place may have been part of a cultural campaign designed to legitimate Manfred's rule; whatever the original impetus for its translation, the Latin version traveled rapidly across western Europe in the second half of the thirteenth century. Its comparatively quick diffusion suggests that it filled a distinct need in scholastic culture, a need to legitimate the controversial desire to give faith a rational foundation. While the most far-reaching condemnation of certain tenets of Aristotelian natural philosophy was issued in 1277, an event discussed below, a succession of censures beginning in 1210 had made it plain that these doctrines had been under suspicion much earlier, and that this suspicion had been increasing.²⁴ This discomfort may explain why *De pomo* was often transmitted in manuscripts containing the standard corpus of Aristotle's natural philosophical works. While we can only speculate on how such a text would have been interpreted by the students who encountered it alongside the *Physics* and the rest of the *libri naturales* in these manuscripts, it is possible that the treatise could act as a post hoc legitimization of the compatibility between the Aristotelian science encountered in the arts faculty and the theological studies that students

would eventually pursue. In a similarly speculative vein, it is interesting to consider why it is that the preponderance of manuscripts containing *De pomo* have a French origin; this shared provenance may reflect the fact that the controversy and condemnation of Aristotle's works were most intensely debated in and around Paris over many decades of the thirteenth century.²⁵

Unlike the more canonical of Aristotelian natural philosophical works that we know were read in the arts curriculum, *De pomo* circulated in both academic and extra-academic manuscript contexts. In the majority of the extant manuscripts, it appears together with other Aristotelian texts of natural philosophy (such as the *Physics*, *De caelo*, and *De anima*) that were intended for use by arts students. At other times it traveled with a select epitome of natural philosophical texts; in the thirteenth-century Eisenbibliothek manuscript (see [Figure 2](#) above), *De pomo* appears with works by Albertus Magnus (*De mineralibus*, *De natura loci*), Johannes Sacrobosco's *Tractatus de sphaera*, and a medieval commentary on Aristotle's *De longitudine et brevitae vitae*.²⁶ While common in university texts of the *libri naturales*, the treatise also appears in miscellanies that were apparently compiled for either secular religious or household use.

Comparing two such manuscripts helps to clarify how *De pomo* may have been read differently by different audiences. Cambridge University Library MS Gg.4.25 is a fourteenth- and fifteenth-century collection of Latin tracts including chronicles, hagiographic accounts, political prophecies, a genealogy of Edward IV beginning with Adam, eschatological texts such as Bridget's *Revelationes*, and a copy of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum* ([Figure 3](#)).²⁷ Written in the same fifteenth-century hand as the *Secretum* and a short Latin treatise on the soul, *De pomo* has affinities with both of these texts given its theological preoccupation with the status of the material in relation to the spiritual as well as its status as an "advice text" in the tradition of the *ars moriendi*. We know that medieval writers saw *De pomo* as part of this genre, as it receives an approving mention in Jean LeFèvre's *Respit de la mort* (ca. 1370s), an *ars moriendi* that cites the "Livret de la Pomme" and Aristotle's good death as a way to approach mortality without debilitating fear.²⁸ The content of this manuscript suggests that it may have been a clerical miscellany, but one that does not have an exclusively religious focus, given its marked interest in prophecies foretelling Arthur's return and the issues of good civic governance addressed in both the *Secretum* and the chronicle accounts. In this miscellany, *De pomo* might be read less for what it tells the reader about the correct use of natural philosophical knowledge and more for what it could tell him or her about what constitutes a good death.

possession of one Robert Norman, a master and fellow of Balliol College.³⁰ The text's extensive contemporary glossing suggests that it was well used by generations of arts students. While readers' marks in Gg.4.25's *De pomo* merely point generally to the treatise's affinities with academic Aristotelianism by including an occasional marginal observation such as "nota de anima" (fol. 56v), the university manuscript provides specific marginal glosses that refer readers to relevant passages in *De anima* and the pseudo-Aristotelian *De complexiones*. Both the layout and the readers' marks suggest that the university students who encountered *De pomo* as part of the arts curriculum applied similar types of hermeneutic tools to it and sought to understand it in relation to the wider body of Aristotle's science. What such students would have thought of *De pomo*'s Christianized Aristotle, one who would have appeared at once familiar and uncanny, is less clear.

In these two manuscripts, we see a variety of ways in which Aristotle's death could be used: *De pomo* could be framed either as a popular *ars moriendi* or as a rationalizing sidecar attached to the *libri naturales*. In them, we see *De pomo* traveling in different, yet clearly not exclusive, intellectual contexts, a pattern that implies that the questions raised by Aristotle's science in relation to the theological interests of the day were matters of concern across many communities, not just within the university but outside of it as well. From the last quarter of the thirteenth century, interpretations of *De pomo*'s Aristotle would become embroiled in an escalating academic debate over his science, one that within about twenty-five years of its Latin translation would come to a head.

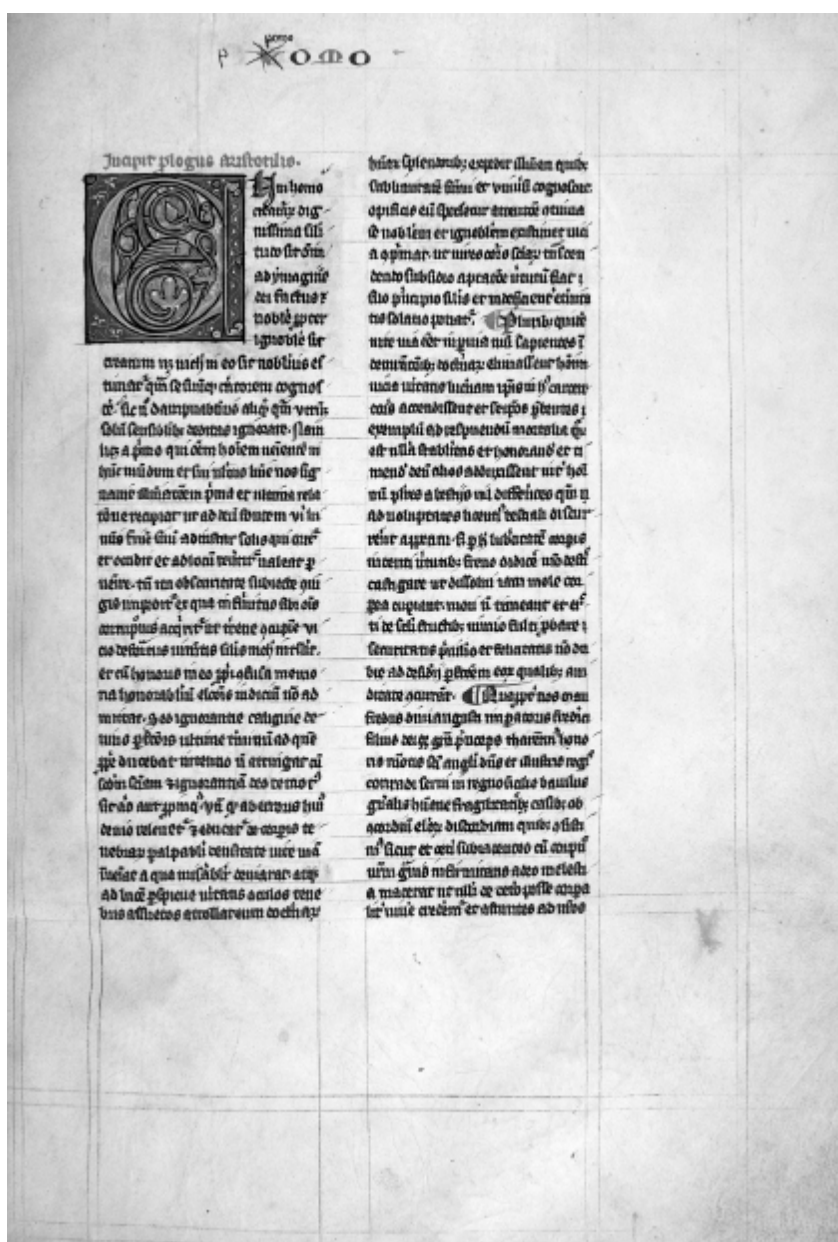


FIGURE 4. Opening of *De pomo* in a copy of Aristotle's *libri naturales*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Ii.2.10, fol. 214. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

The Rule of Nature and the Condemnation of 1277

I believe that that man [Aristotle] was the rule of Nature

[*regula in Natura*] and the model that Nature discovered for demonstrating the ultimate human perfection in corporeal body.

—Averroës, *Long Commentary on Aristotle's "De anima"*

What is said by the Commentator [Averroës]—that Nature showed in him [Aristotle] the ultimate human perfection in kind—is not very much esteemed, because the Commentator, wanting the Aristotelian intellect to be individually unmixed, argued that all souls are numerically one in substance.

Whence the whole idea was heretical.

—From an anonymous early fourteenth-century question

De pomo's rehabilitated Aristotle can be seen as attempting to offer a compromise solution to the simmering conflict between theological orthodoxy and natural philosophy. This negotiated settlement was not one that would prove workable in the long run. Aristotle had, of course, never lacked for medieval champions: the prolific Aristotelian commentator Averroës famously called the philosopher “the rule of Nature,” an epithet cited approvingly by a variety of medieval Latin authors, who believed that Greek science was largely compatible with Christian doctrine.³¹ Aristotle's physical theories, however, had begun to pose greater challenges for orthodox theological understandings as his writings began to be more widely read and commented upon over the course of the thirteenth century.³² Some commentators would find Aristotle's rule to be less than benign. A rejoinder to the idea of Aristotle as *regula in Natura* took the form of the periodic refrain, well documented by Luca Bianchi, that “Aristotle was a man and may have erred.”³³ Sometimes Aristotle's own writings were cited to denigrate his views; at other times, it was the interpretations of his Arabic commentators. One anonymous fourteenth-century writer argues against Averroës's honorific for Aristotle because the philosopher's writings might be used as evidence for heretical doctrines such as the (frequently condemned) idea of the unicity of the intellect, a monopsychism erroneously attributed to Aristotle by Averroës, who had himself argued for a shared substance common to all souls.³⁴

The debate leading up to 1277 anticipates the tenor of the complaints that would be made against Aristotelian positions in the condemnation proper. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the writings of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas sought to demonstrate how Aristotelian physics could potentially reinforce Christian teachings across a range of theological topics, including the nature of the soul and the functioning of the

will. The compatibilist project of Albertus and Aquinas was picked apart by later theologians such as Bonaventure, Henry of Ghent, and John Peckham. In exploring how knowledge of creatures contributes to our knowledge of the Creator, Henry of Ghent, for instance, would seek to modify the compatibilist position by emphasizing the role played by divine illumination over that of the sensitive soul in the epistemological process. Unlike those earlier Dominican writers, Henry saw a distinct limit to the sorts of knowledge that could come from analogy; what we apprehend around us and what we can intuit of God were at some distance from one another, because, in his view, there is no real community between creatural being and divine being.³⁵ Conversation between Augustinians and Aristotelians in Paris grew more shrill as Aristotle's physical science was subject to several successive waves of censure. For those with Augustinian inclinations, the greatest sin would be to look at the cosmos through the literal eye rather than through the eye of faith, to presume to know that which is ultimately unknowable. For Aristotelians, the greater sin would be the failure to acknowledge the homologous orders immanent in the physical and spiritual worlds, a refusal to follow the path that God had meticulously laid out for human salvation. That path led from the earthly to the divine.³⁶

These tensions boiled over in the 1270s, a decade that saw a more concerted push to eradicate Aristotelian error not just from the University of Paris but from intellectual life more generally. In 1270, the bishop of Paris, Étienne Tempier, condemned a variety of beliefs, several stemming from Aristotle's positions, such as his skepticism about the created nature of the world; about God's ability to know individuals or things other than himself; and about the unity of the human intellect.³⁷ In 1272, the Paris arts faculty approved changes to the curriculum that limited their own ability to determine on theological questions. In the following year, Bonaventure's *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* criticized Peripatetic positions and those arts masters who followed and taught these doctrines.³⁸ In 1276, the radical Aristotelian Siger of Brabant along with other members of the arts faculty were charged with heresy, charges that stemmed in part from their overly zealous application of natural reason to theological questions. All of these events stigmatized aspects of Aristotelian natural philosophy that had previously been freely discussed within the university.

It is only with Tempier's 1277 condemnation, however, that we see an official, and indisputable, shift in tides, a moment when church authorities assert that there is a right way to talk about nature, and it is not the way of Aristotle. The document, apparently issued with papal sanction if not prompting, prohibits the teaching of 219 propositions thought to be incompatible with orthodox belief.³⁹ While the condemnation addressed a number of topics including the operations of providence, human free will, and the correct understanding of the Eucharist, there were several sets of propositions specifically concerned with the dangers of philosophy and

Aristotelian science in particular. The condemnation emphasized that man was not subject to the same types of laws that governed the rest of nature (for example, the movement of the elements and the planets, which were thought to direct earthly occurrences) and affirmed that the human will was in all ways free from purely phenomenal influence. It also stated that natural philosophy and the application of causal reasoning to theological questions posed a danger to religious orthodoxy, threatening belief in God's omnipotence. Tempier's document singled out the arts masters Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia, both of whom were accused of heresy for arguing that rational truths could be independent of theological ones. Overly influenced by Averroës, they were seen to have followed "the rule of Nature" too closely.

The condemnation was aimed not just at these so-called radical Aristotelians, however. It also made it dangerous to be an enthusiastic supporter of Aristotelian views on physical reality across a range of topics, from motion to matter to the power of place. While it is easy to see why certain Aristotelian beliefs were condemned—his insistence on the eternity of the world in the face of the *ex nihilo* creation story found in Genesis, for instance—the harm inherent in some of the other condemned scientific views is less readily apparent. Why proscribe the view that the heavens cannot be moved in a rectilinear fashion or that a void could not exist within the plenum? These beliefs were dangerous, not because they contradicted scripture or church doctrine, but because, in the eyes of conservative theologians, they could potentially limit God's omnipotence.⁴⁰ This unease finds direct expression in the condemned opinion that "what is impossible absolutely speaking [*simpliciter*] cannot be accomplished by God or by another agent—that is an error if what is meant is that it is impossible according to nature."⁴¹ The 1277 condemnation changed the way medieval philosophers and theologians discussed nature because the principle of natural necessity could no longer be appealed to regarding theological questions concerning the extent of God's power. Once you start counting the stars, conservative theologians argued, you limit God's power to that which you can see only with your own eyes; besides, searching for the secrets of nature—the order of causes—was futile when God could change his mind at any moment and will something completely different. That these dangers were seen to arise specifically from Aristotle's scientific works is clear from the fact that the thirteenth-century censure of Aristotle takes issue only with the natural philosophical texts in the Aristotelian canon; other works such as the *Ethics* and the *Logic* were not subject to censure. The condemnation was thus the most far-reaching statement of the dangers posed by Aristotle's vision of nature to orthodox religious accounts of what nature was and where humans belonged within it.

Modern historians have argued over the degree to which the condemnation could be seen as a rupture with what had come before. To

what extent was 1277, in the words of Kent Emery and Andreas Speer, the editors of a recent volume dedicated to it, “symbolic of an intellectual crisis in the University and of fundamental shifts in speculative thought and cultural perception that occurred in the late thirteenth century and which portend aspects of modern thought”?⁴² The older interpretations of the condemnation emphasized its causal nature. Pierre Duhem argued that the condemnation’s emphasis on God’s absolute power encouraged scholastic writers to depart from Aristotle’s scientific models and to formulate new ones.⁴³ Étienne Gilson, by contrast, saw not progress but philosophical retreat as the outcome of 1277. He believed that, in refuting the exquisite Thomist synthesis between natural reason and Christian doctrine, the condemnation led to a movement away from trying to understand the mechanics of earthly change within a larger providential vision.⁴⁴ Subsequent studies have argued less for a radical break with what came before and more for continuity of long-term intellectual developments over the course of the late medieval period.⁴⁵ Despite a variety of opinions on how radical a departure 1277 truly was, one point of consensus is that the condemnation sought, in part, to arbitrate an institutional problem. While the thirteenth-century reception of Aristotle’s natural science bears the complicated impressions of factionalism among religious orders as well as papal politics, one of the pressures on this reception was the competing claims of arts and theology masters. Several propositions condemned by Tempier suggest that the protoempiricism championed by the arts faculty was thought to endanger scriptural authority. While natural science would never be autonomous from theology—after all the academic curriculum was determined by the religious ends of a university education—the condemned propositions attest the fact that both arts and theology masters were treating questions of physical science that were seen to conflict with doctrines of faith.⁴⁶ Tempier and like-minded thinkers were not just worried about the heterodox teaching of Aristotle within the arts faculty; they were also concerned with the more disturbing problem that “pagan philosophic ideas [were] being entertained within the teaching of theology itself.”⁴⁷ The theology faculty, increasingly uneasy about the application of natural reason to doctrinal questions, tended to oppose the availability of unexpurgated natural philosophical texts and to align themselves with the more transcendent views articulated by Augustine.⁴⁸ The work of Alain de Libera and Luca Bianchi has discerned in this institutional tension, along with the condemnation’s desire to arbitrate it, the birth of a conception of philosophy that sought to codify natural knowledge as the basis for an ethical system that, while not wholly autonomous from theology, could provide different answers to questions about human happiness and morality.⁴⁹

The 1277 condemnation testified to an intramural struggle in Paris between the arts faculty who were teaching Aristotelian ways of knowing the world and a theology faculty wary of applying such knowledge to

doctrinal questions; however, its reach extended far beyond Paris. According to John F. Wippel, the condemnation was widely influential “not only because of the prestige of the theology faculty at Paris, but also because the Parisian articles would be incorporated into the statutes of a number of universities founded after the thirteenth century.”⁵⁰ Fears over the philosophical contamination of orthodoxy expressed in Paris were almost immediately echoed in England. Following closely on the Parisian condemnation, the archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Kilwardby, publicly censured some parts of the *Physics* in Oxford.⁵¹ The imprint of this debate can be seen in British Library Harley MS 3487, an English copy of Aristotle’s *libri naturales* made for university use in the last quarter of the thirteenth century (Figure 5). The opening illuminated initial of the *Physics*—the first text in the *libri naturales*—depicts a young boy throwing books on a bonfire, watched by tonsured figures behind him and a royal figure opposite. The art historian Michael Camille has argued that this illuminated initial refers to the controversy over Aristotelian natural philosophy provoked by the Paris condemnation.⁵² English antipathy to Aristotelian science among members of the ecclesiastic hierarchy was not just a singular occurrence: in 1284 Kilwardby’s successor, John Peckham, reissued Kilwardby’s condemnation and, two years later, issued further condemnations of his own.⁵³ The aftermath of 1277 shows that the problem of applying natural reason to theological questions was an active one that would directly influence English as well as French academic life over the last quarter of the thirteenth century and beyond.



FIGURE 5. The opening of Aristotle’s *Physics* depicting the burning of books. London, British Library, Harley MS 3487, fol. 4. © British Library Board.

In the charged intellectual milieu of the 1270s, the midcentury claims of *De pomo*’s Aristotle would look much more radical than they did just a few decades earlier. Post-condemnation, Aristotle’s demand (as reported in *De pomo*) that his students affirm the study of philosophy as the highest domain

of inquiry would no longer sound like a perfunctory pedagogic exercise. It would instead ripple across the institutional antagonism between theology and natural philosophy, antagonism that found expression in Tempier's denunciation of the idea, "quod non est excellentior status quam vacare philosophie" (that there is no more excellent position than to have the leisure to study philosophy).⁵⁴ Aristotle's claims in *De pomo* would seem to be precisely the kind of hubris that the condemnation sought to punish and that the account of Aristotle's ostensible suicide in the Euripus (as reported in Higden's *Polychronicon* and other sources) sought to publicize. As Luca Bianchi has argued, the affirmation of a philosophy autonomous from theology would become more widespread and hence more dangerous.⁵⁵ In this environment, *De pomo*'s mid-thirteenth-century claim that "he who seeks after [philosophy] searches for truth and rectitude in the highest and most divine degrees" would appear more radical as orthodox worries intensified about a philosophical study that seemed to have ends independent from the theology to which it was ostensibly merely a handmaiden.⁵⁶

Whether Aristotle dies smelling an apple or drowned in the Greek sea, these dueling accounts represent opposed judgments on Aristotelian natural science, an argument that the 1277 condemnation had sought to arbitrate once and for all. Trevisa's fit of marginal pique in his fourteenth-century translation, however, demonstrates that this issue was far from settled. The earlier conflict between the arts and theology faculties would continue to reverberate through a surprisingly diverse number of textual environments both within the university and much farther afield over the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The Afterlives of Aristotle's Afterlife

Like the author of *De pomo*, late medieval writers who found Aristotelian ways of knowing the material world to be compatible with revealed truths often imagined that God would look mercifully on those who lived righteously before the Incarnation. No portrayal is as well known (or possibly as sympathetic) as that of Dante, for whom Aristotle was, famously, "il maestro di color che sanno" (the master of those who know). Pained by the idea that the philosopher who brought so much knowledge to the world may be lost forever, the narrator of the *Inferno* rejoices to learn that he is not necessarily damned but rather in limbo with other virtuous pagans.⁵⁷ For writers such as Dante, the learned pagan Aristotle was a conundrum: his vast learning was often cited by Christian writers and yet his non-Christian life could not be seen as straightforwardly exemplary. Instead, his fate became a type for the unknowability of God's plan with respect to anyone's salvation, not just the salvation of those who lived before Christ.

The salvation of the just pagan was a common medieval topos and one that has been written about extensively.⁵⁸ However, the accounts that I will consider next do not use the story of Aristotle's death primarily as a vehicle for meditating on the inscrutability of providential judgment and the limits of human knowledge. Instead, his potential afterlife becomes a platform for advocating for particular interpretations of Aristotelian natural philosophy. Within the university, his afterlife becomes yet another field on which the partisan politics of 1277 would continue to play out. In vernacular literature, the stories that earlier pagans told about the philosopher's end would offer a place for medieval Christian writers to reflect on contemporary beliefs not just about natural reason but also about wider questions of sanctity and embodiment.

Aristotle's death shows that debate over the usefulness of Aristotelian modes of knowing the world (whether through his logical categories or his science) did not just "trickle down" unidirectionally from universities into more popular forms; instead, this knowledge circulated among different textual and cultural registers in a more diffuse way. We see this fluidity in the interchange between scholastic disputation with both *De pomo* and the popular *Secretum secretorum*, the apocryphal letter ostensibly written by Aristotle to his pupil Alexander. The most popular of all the Aristotelian spuria, the *Secretum* exists in over 350 Latin manuscripts and was translated into Latin fully in the first half of the thirteenth century.⁵⁹ A guide to good self-government, the book covers a range of topics, from royal manners to diet to encyclopedic discussions of the natural world (the seasons, the elements, the body, astronomy). Like *De pomo*, the *Secretum's* prologue weighs in on Aristotle's ultimate end: we learn that, during his lifetime, God had sent an angel to Aristotle affirming his quasiprophetic status and that, at his death, the philosopher ascended to heaven in a column of fire. While I will discuss this scene in more detail below, for now, it is important to point out that the *Secretum* was not a university text even if it was one known to many university writers.⁶⁰ It is marshaled, however, as evidence in university discussion of the philosopher's salvation, which becomes a topic of some interest in *quaestiones* and commentary post-1277. According to Anton-Hermann Chroust, the question entitled "Utrum Aristoteles sit salvatus" first appears in the early years of the fourteenth century.⁶¹

The *Secretum's* account of Aristotle's bodily rapture to heaven was to prove an irresistible anecdote, one put to use by the philosopher's supporters as well as his opponents. According to John Marenbon's recent and comprehensive study, the main way that university writers argued for the salvation of the just pagan was on the basis of "implicit" as opposed to "explicit" faith. Advocated by writers such as Aquinas, this doctrine allowed pagan philosophers, to be saved, alongside Old Testament figures, based on an "implicit cognition of God."⁶² Not everyone found this argument compelling. Bonaventure argued that even "good" pagans such as Plato were

consigned to hell because they lacked access to the mediatory power of the Incarnation, a position that became common among Franciscan writers. The Parisian master John of Pouilly, an ardent admirer of Aristotle the man as well as his natural philosophy, follows the Thomist model and favorably cites the *Secretum's* characterization of an angelic Aristotle in his written account of an early fourteenth-century quodlibetal disputation.⁶³ John of Pouilly's answer to the question of whether or not Aristotle is saved marshals prominent character witnesses for the pagan, including Boethius, Augustine, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and Giles of Rome.⁶⁴ John had been a student of both Henry of Ghent and Godfrey of Fontaines and had presumably experienced the tumultuous 1270s firsthand. He carried on that polemical debate over Aristotle's thought with Henry's other students—a group he identifies as the *Gandavistae*—on logical, physical, and theological subjects. The work of Ludwig Hödl has highlighted the role that Aristotle the man played in these debates. The *Gandavistae* bragged that their master Henry was a teacher of such prowess that, had he lived at the same time as Aristotle, the later philosopher would have outshone the earlier. Henry was, according to his students, the true *regula in natura*.⁶⁵ John of Pouilly found this claim to be overblown. In his response to it, he approvingly cites Aristotle as the true “rule of nature” before remarking slightly that, unfortunately, the same cannot be said of his opponents who are rather “an ambiguity in nature.”⁶⁶ Defending Aristotle based on his virtuous life and “good” death remained an arrow in the quiver of scholastics who wished to defend the philosopher's authority.⁶⁷

If some late medieval disputants would send Aristotle directly to heaven, others would send the philosopher straight down to hell. The large collection of *quodlibeta* found in Codex Vatican Lateran 1012 preserves questions from the first two decades of the fourteenth century by anonymous writers as well as collections by William of Alnick and James of Ascoli.⁶⁸ The manuscript is associated with a Franciscan intellectual tradition that, according to William O. Duba, seems to reflect more specifically “a Scotist point of view.”⁶⁹ The question “Queritur modo utrum Aristotiles sit salvatus” appears in the manuscript's final, anonymous section. The Franciscan writer brings up the *Secretum's* image of a proto-Christian Aristotle only to quash it definitively. Aristotle is damned because his conception of the soul cannot be reconciled with a Christian belief in its individual resurrection. The anonymous writer cites the usual charges made against the philosopher: that he believes in the eternity of the world (thus resulting in an infinity of souls) and that he was a monopsychist (Averroës's view, often attributed to Aristotle, that there was but one shared consciousness among human beings). Having scuttled the compatibilist view of Aristotle, the writer takes aim at how these ideas circulated in popular sources, concluding that the reasons adduced in *De pomo* were of insufficient authority.⁷⁰ The censure of Aristotle's views on the soul as well as the dismissal of the popular sources

that sought to defend them would endure: these anti-Aristotelian sentiments are echoed later in the century by Peter of Candia (also known as the schismatic pope Alexander V).⁷¹

My point in comparing the opposing views of John of Pouilly and the anonymous Franciscan whose *quodlibeta* are preserved in Vatican Lateran 1012 is neither to assess the merits of their respective interpretations of Aristotle's death nor to argue that these spurious texts were seen as rigorous and legitimate sources by significant numbers of university writers; instead, it is that such commentary, whether sympathetic to or suspicious of Aristotle, shows how more popular versions of Aristotle's afterlife nonetheless had the power to influence university arguments over the fate of Aristotle's soul as well as the standing of his *scientia*.

If accounts of Aristotle's end became enmeshed with partisan university politics in early fourteenth-century Paris, these same accounts would reappear (though put to different ends) in the later vernacular versions of the *Secretum* and works such as *The Book of John Mandeville*, a mid-fourteenth-century account of travel to the Holy Land and well beyond. Importantly, these works are either direct vehicles for Aristotelian natural knowledge themselves or they argue for the fundamental virtue of natural reason (or both). Like *De pomo*, they move across multiple languages in a relatively short amount of time, though these works had a much broader popular appeal.

While both of these works reflect some of the pressures that shaped the academic debate over Aristotle's fate—the compatibility of pagan mores and Christian culture, for instance—the issues raised in these texts were also distinct. Within the university, this debate had been in part about the competing claims to prestige of a university arts faculty who taught natural philosophy, over and against those of a theology faculty who were the self-appointed guardians of interpretive orthodoxy. In extra-academic contexts, however, discussion of Aristotle the man generated sometimes uncomfortable symmetries between Christian and non-Christian practices, correspondences that raised questions about the singularity of both revealed knowledge and the Latin exegetical tradition that documented it.

As we have seen, the *Secretum* features an Aristotle who is simultaneously pagan and proto-Christian: his natural science is a conspicuous point of convergence between the two. While the earliest surviving Middle English version dates only to the first quarter of the fifteenth century, its French and Latin versions enjoyed wide currency in England in the preceding century.⁷² My discussion here focuses on the translation that is attributed to the scribe John Shirley and dedicated to Henry VI.⁷³ As in the other versions of the *Secretum*, Aristotle's cultural hybridity is most conspicuously on display in Shirley's prologue, which eulogizes Aristotle as quasi-angelic on account of the vastness of his learning. Like Averroës who believed Aristotle to be the "rule of Nature," the

Secretum narrator praises Aristotle as the most exemplary of philosophers, one whose achievements surpass “both witt of man and werkys of nature.”⁷⁴ Aristotle, though pagan, was thought to have received divine sanction both during and after his lifetime:

And therefore many philosophres reputed hym of the
nombre of profettes, and seid that he had foundon in many
bokes of Grece, of Egipt, and of the Ebrayeux, that God had
sent hym his glorious aungel that said to him, “I shall make
the called by all the worlde more aungel then man.” And wit
ye wel that Arystotle made in his live many stronge sygnes,
warkes, and miracles, that shoulde be longe forto reherce, and
att his deyng did right stronge and grete dyuersitees. Bicause
that, a religion and a companye of folk that cleped hem
“Paripatik” said and helde this opynion, that he had passed to
heven in the fourme of culuer of fure.⁷⁵

A prophetic nature; an angelic visitation; miraculous deeds committed both during life and after death: such characteristics would have suggested the cult of the saints to a medieval reader of the *Secretum secretorum*. These ideas, however, are attributed variously to “philosophers”—a Middle English term that usually refers to classical and, hence, pagan writers—“Greek, Egyptian, and Hebrew books,” and, finally, “the Peripatetics” respectively. This rhetorical bracketing suggests that these views are to be understood in that context. That being said, readers are left to make their own assessment of the pagan claims about the Greek philosopher’s anointed status; readers must decide for themselves what to think about Aristotle’s afterlife.

The effect of this narrative choice becomes clearer if we compare the relative agnosticism of the fifteenth-century vernacular version with an earlier Latin commentary tradition that originates within the Oxford academic milieu of the 1270s. Perhaps the most well-known medieval reader of the *Secretum* was the philosopher Roger Bacon, whose commentary subsequently circulated with the work.⁷⁶ An outstanding polymath in an age of polymaths, Bacon was known for his work on natural science and mathematics (especially optics), his teaching of Aristotle, and his program of educational and theological reforms. From the 1260s, his writings on *scientia experimentalis* are littered with references to the *Secretum*, and he was certainly invested in its science and moral philosophy.⁷⁷ Bacon’s views on Aristotle’s afterlife, however, are complicated. The passage quoted above in Middle English is glossed by Bacon and begins with what appears to be a clear refutation of a saved Aristotle: “Hec est sententia philosophorum paganorum, set nobis Christianis non est licitum hoc sentire nec firmare, quia nisi habuisset fidem Christi revelatam ei aut fuisset instructus a prophetis, salvari non potuit” (This is the belief of pagan philosophers but it is not lawful for us Christians to believe or confirm it, because he could not

have been saved unless he had the Christian faith revealed to him or else he had been instructed by the prophets).⁷⁸ Despite this seeming certitude, the gloss then goes on to point out the ways in which Aristotle anticipates many views later embraced by Christians, including a belief in the Trinity that he would have learned from his teacher Plato, as well as Avicenna's claim that Aristotle taught the doctrine of the resurrection of the soul. The gloss ends by claiming that these philosophers had only the preliminaries of faith (*preludia fidei*) and that we cannot know whether this was sufficient to have saved them. He ends by invoking the unknowability topos commonly used by medieval writers on the question of pagan salvation: "nescimus quid fecerit eis Deus" (we do not know what God has done concerning them). Bacon's ambivalence here is telling; it may come from the atmosphere of heightened suspicion in Oxford following the Parisian condemnations or a wish not to be seen as refuting the more common Franciscan position on Aristotle's salvation (or both). We can only speculate as to why Bacon begins by rejecting the possibility of pagan salvation only to offer arguments in its favor. The effect of the vacillating gloss, however, is to highlight the distance between a Christian "us" and a pagan (if uncanny) "them," a problem that cannot be resolved through reason but only referred to a higher power, the inscrutability of providence.

To return then briefly to Shirley's mid-fifteenth-century version of the *Secretum*: Unlike Bacon's commentary, which focuses our attention on how we assess the continuities between pagan and Christian, the vernacular translations (including Shirley's) do not focus our attention on the formation and maintenance of these temporal and cultural distinctions. The account of Aristotle's afterlife remains unelaborated; it is not ultimately a story about the unknowability of the divine plan but rather one about what we can know in the here and now. Shirley's prologue encourages us to see continuity between the classical past and the Christian present in the very act of translation itself, in the long genealogy of language mediation that immediately follows the account of Aristotle's life. Shirley here reflects on his own role as translator of this work, inserting himself into this line of translators from ancient Greek to his own rendering of this work into a "reude" and "boistus" English.⁷⁹ Moreover, in an addition to his French source, Shirley identifies the translation itself as a source of "naturall disciplyne of hem that list to here and rede."⁸⁰ "Naturall disciplyne" offers a model of moral conduct shaped by knowledge of the Aristotelian science and ethics contained within the book; as such, it offers an alternative or supplement to other strictly theological modes of moral correction. It is, importantly, one that makes a role for the ethical values of translation. The emphasis here is not on what we cannot know above (God's mind) but what we can know here. Like a potentially saved Aristotle, the translator offers his audience an exemplary life of virtue based on natural models.

If the English *Secretum secretorum* leaves the door open to Aristotle's

salvation even as it acts as a popular vehicle for his learning, *The Book of John Mandeville* focuses our attention on the posthumous Aristotle as a way to explore what the legacy of his science can offer to Mandeville's own society. Mandeville offers a radically abbreviated *vita* of the philosopher, one whose primary concern is with the philosopher's death rather than his life, in the *Book's* discussion of Constantinople and its Greek Orthodox Christianity. Originally composed in French in the 1350s, *The Book of John Mandeville* circulated widely; there are over 250 extant manuscripts in at least ten languages.⁸¹ This work appears to have been translated into English sometime during the last quarter of the fourteenth century.⁸² Presented as a firsthand travelogue, the book describes the customs and manners of societies as it works its way from Jerusalem to lands farther east, some contemporary, some historical, some biblical, and some—like Prester John's kingdom—emphatically fantastical. While much of its information is drawn from earlier travel accounts and encyclopedias, it is the arrangement and emphasis that make *The Book of John Mandeville* a provocative commentary on the contemporary European society of its author. Mandeville's eastward itinerary includes a detour to Stagira, the birthplace of Aristotle:

In that contree was Aristotle born in a cytee that men clepen
Stragers a lytil fro the cytee of Trachye. And at Stragers lyth
Aristotle, and there is an awtier vpon his tounge. And there
maken men grete festes of hym euery yeer as though he were
a seynt, and at his awtier thei holden here grete conseilles and
here assembleez, and thei hopen that thorgh inspiracoun of
God and of him thei schulle haue the better conseil.⁸³

While the narrator remains silent as to the ultimate fate of Aristotle's soul, Aristotle's tomb becomes the site of proleptically Christian posthumous practices. The Greeks celebrate a yearly feast on the philosopher's tomb, which becomes a site for political gatherings, "as if he were a saint." Even without the explicit simile, the author's description of the ritual use of Aristotle's grave would have invoked analogous practices in the West involving saints' tombs and the *cultus* surrounding them. These rituals—the yearly feast day attended by the town's most powerful men; the continuity between Aristotle's role as sage counselor in life and as civic patron in death—formed the continuum familiar from the cult of the saints whose feast days were regularly used in a similar fashion to strengthen bonds of amity and to define the bounds of community. In Peter Brown's words, such feast days cemented an "ideal consensus" wherein the righteous use of political power was championed over its misuse.⁸⁴ So too the pagan version valued proximity to and veneration of the body, practices highlighting the charisma of Aristotle's physical remains. One early fifteenth-century manuscript, British Library Additional 24189, reinforces this temporal and cultural translation by showing the pilgrims gathered at Aristotle's tomb in medieval

garb and making offerings (Figure 6). Like his sacred European counterpart, the philosopher's body adjoins heaven and earth, a testament to its posthumous power. While Aristotle's tomb witnesses just how close the Christian and non-Christian religious practices may appear, they are not completely coextensive; the narrator then goes on to list the many discrepancies to be found between contemporary Eastern Orthodox and Western European Christian practices, from contradictory beliefs in the role of the Holy Ghost to their opinions about appropriate fast days. Like contemporary medieval Greeks and their Eastern Orthodox practices, the pagan Aristotle is Christian yet not quite Christian. Oddly, the pagan Aristotle seems more Christian than the contemporary Eastern Orthodox Christians, given that the postmortem practices at his tomb evoke a familiarity that is dispelled only by the long list of doctrinal divergences between the two churches in the present that follows it.

The "almost" and "not quite" of Aristotle—after death, he is *like* a Christian saint but neither Christian nor a saint—is an important example of what critics have long recognized as the text's central rhetorical conceit: in ostensibly teaching us the differences between cultures, the narrator presents the East as an uncanny reflection of the West. For Iain Macleod Higgins, it is Mandeville's "self-critical mirror"; for Sebastian I. Sobecki, it is the "thought of the limit," where Mandeville's transgressive encounter with the Eastern Other is analogous to the process of reading itself.⁸⁵ This reflective mode depends on the deep analogies that the text generates between Christianity and its non-Christian precursors, analogies that go beyond typology.



FIGURE 6. Aristotle's tomb in *The Book of John Mandeville*. London, British Library, Additional 24189, fol. 6v. © British Library Board.

One such foundational analogy for Mandeville is the use of a divinely implanted natural reason that ideally operates in both Christian and non-Christian societies alike. The events at Aristotle's tomb are just one example of the narrator's exceptionally strong respect for the law of nature as a moral compass, a theme that runs throughout the book and that is most clearly articulated in the description of the islanders of Bragmey and the inhabitants of Oxidrace, peoples who live simply and in harmony with lessons taken from the world around them. Their rational relationship to this world allows them to shun wealth, status, and elaborate dress in favor of peace and communal prosperity. If these Eastern peoples are exemplary

proto-Christians, they are, moreover, exemplary Aristotelian natural scientists who have successfully extrapolated a moral system from the world around them. The author notes approvingly that “alle be it that theyse folk han not the articles of oure feyth as wee han, natheles for hire gode feyth naturelle and for hire gode entent I trowe fully that God loueth hem and that God take hire seruyse to gree, right as He did of Iob that was a paynem and held him for His trewe seruant.”⁸⁶ Here pagan practice, which through natural law fulfills the Ten Commandments, is shown to be more fully Christian than Western Christian practices.⁸⁷ In the narrator’s view, the same nature is found everywhere and everywhere can be exemplary.

As we have seen, finding common ground between Christianity and a moral order inherent in nature was the goal of thirteenth-century theologians such as Aquinas; this idea of a morality based on natural reason was what Tempier and his commission condemned in 1277 and what was to remain a lively debate over the fourteenth century. As with the posthumous practices at Aristotle’s tomb, Bragman naturalism—an ethics reflecting natural law—affirms the compatibilist approach, one that found an organic connection between the material and spiritual orders. In the post-1277 environment, as natural philosophers had to draw a clearer line between what could and could not be approached with natural reason, this travel narrative puts forward the hypothesis that our natural reason can lead us to ethical practices much like those of Christians themselves (even if it cannot lead to the truths of revelation).

When Mandeville’s representation of Aristotle and natural reason are read as popular witnesses to the controversy over the potential dangers of Aristotelian natural science, we gain insight not only into a central thematic of *The Book of John Mandeville* but also into the popular reception of this constellation of ideas in the century after Tempier’s condemnations. Critical discussion of Mandeville’s East-West mimesis regularly attempts to pinpoint its cause and effects: Do such moments—where the East looks like a doppelgänger of contemporary Western practices—function to domesticate the Oriental Other? Or does it anatomize that “other” in order to criticize it? In his book *Writing East*, Iain Macleod Higgins argues that in such passages as the description of Aristotle’s tomb, “*The Book* neither judges nor attacks Greek variance; it simply describes the differences.” In passages where the Eastern societies are condemned for religious practices prevalent in the West such as usury, Higgins argues for Mandeville’s tendency to use the East as a rebuke to Western practices.⁸⁸ A contrary view has been offered by Fabienne Michelet, who argues that the Eastern Other is represented in order “to silence and subdue alterity.”⁸⁹ Such views, which frame the representational question in terms of a binary of authorial intention—does the narrator celebrate or censure the East?—ignore the fact that the East was always already “within” Western understandings of its own identity in the form of the university arts curriculum that was largely shaped by works of Greek

science, rhetoric, and logic.

Mandeville understood this dynamic, and his Aristotle is a hybrid figure who embodies parts of both cultures but is reducible to neither. Following Homi Bhaba and other postcolonial critics, Jeffrey J. Cohen redefines the cultural hybrid in medieval terms as that “difficult middle” that proves to be almost impossible to inhabit.⁹⁰ Aristotle is one such difficult medieval middle: he exists between East and West, between rationalism and revelation, between the saved and the damned. As Cohen and the postcolonial critics on whom he draws remind us, the hybrid brings together different systems of value and identity without fully assimilating one to the other. The question is not whether the Mandeville-author thinks pagan alterity is good or bad. Rather the question behind such episodes seems to be: how is the fact of this alterity best negotiated in an environment where the Greek legacy was rendered suspicious, not just on account of cultural and religious otherness, but on account of the institutional condemnation of its ways of looking at the world? How to make sense of the fact that Western identity is founded on a system of Greek rationalism that was seen to conflict with sanctioned views on the interpretation of nature? To what extent can “feyth naturelle” (as Mandeville calls it) or “naturall disciplyne” (as Shirley puts it) be subservient to, yet functionally apart from, Christian truth? Accounts of Aristotle’s afterlife—whether found in travel literature, popular encyclopedic works such as the *Secretum*, or an academic commentary tradition—do not just tell us a story about the potential redemption of a long-dead pagan or even one about the difficulty of reconciling Greek learning with medieval theological doctrine (though they do both). They also serve as a referendum on this issue of natural reason at the moment they are written.

Beyond this, they also tell us a meaningful story about the vital interchange between academic and extra-academic textual registers in late medieval England. The circulation of these accounts among so many genres and languages, both within and without the university, witnesses how fluid these environments were; it is difficult to speak of a “university” Aristotle that stands discretely apart from a “popular” Aristotle. Such examples suggest not so much a “leeching” of scholastic debate into popular culture, but rather a pattern of recursivity, one that establishes Aristotelian natural reason as a common area of concern for university theologians and for vernacular writers who each had a principled stake in what it meant to represent the visible world.

In introducing a debate over Aristotle’s death and the posthumous fate of his soul into Latin, the mid-thirteenth century *De pomo* had raised the powerful and recurring question of how a writer should represent his own access to the world. Should a writer depend on the information given to him by his eyes or not? Can the physical world provide a suitable starting point for solving ethical and spiritual problems or not? In the wake of *De pomo*,

whether Aristotle was saved became a proxy question for the validity of the role of the senses in the search for truth, a question that was answered in the affirmative by writers sympathetic to the Aristotelian project and in the negative by those who were not. Those writers who embraced the ethical implications of Aristotle's physical science, who imagined the human search for knowledge as a noble endeavor, were a heterogeneous bunch. They included early medieval Arabic commentators such as Averroës; Latin writers such as the one responsible for the translation of *De pomo* together with those scholastic writers who argued for the pagan philosopher's salvation in learned *quaestiones*; as well as a range of vernacular writers from Dante to the translator John Trevisa. In the opposite camp are those writers for whom the senses and sensory observation were inherently fallen. Generally hostile to applying Aristotelian physical insights to theological questions, this group included Tempier and the committee responsible for drafting the 1277 condemnation as well as popular history writers such as Ralph Higden. These writers feared that focusing our gaze too exclusively on the material world would sideline the more central questions of human morality and spirituality. What is most striking about these contrasting ideological lineups is how diverse they are: both camps include academic and extraacademic writers writing for a variety of audiences. This diversity suggests that the "Aristotle question" does not break down along the known fault lines of medieval textual culture; there is not one Aristotle for the learned, another for the lewd.

In the more circumscribed arena of late medieval literary production, we hear echoes, however distantly, of the 1277 condemnation. Identifying and tracing these echoes allows us to map the sometimes occulted ley lines that orient the literary field in England, lines along which theological, scientific, and literary opinions were all aligned. These alignments, in turn, aid our understanding of what it really means when a vernacular translator such as John Trevisa calls out his Latin source in the margins of his text. For Trevisa, the image of Aristotle holding the apple to his nose emblemizes tensions over the proper use of the senses, a challenge not just for a scholastic culture struggling to relate God to his physical operations in the world, but also for those nonacademic writers—poets, translators, historians—who sought to represent these questions for an audience lacking access to the *libri naturales* and to the finer nuances of the theological debates in which they were embroiled.

The differences of opinion on Aristotle's science charted here are not meant to be exhaustive; indeed, they are meant to lay the groundwork for the book's subsequent consideration of the personification of nature by vernacular writers (Jean de Meun, Guillaume de Deguileville, Geoffrey Chaucer, and John Lydgate). This discussion should highlight the all-important fact that arguments about Aristotle's death are just one particular episode in an ongoing conversation within late medieval literary culture, an

argument about what the writer's obligation was with respect to portraying the physical world.

Aristotle and his works would continue, in Dorothee Metlitzki's words, "to loom as emblems of the mysterious wisdom of the East." This persistence was part of the process whereby he was domesticated by European writers.⁹¹ As Suzanne Conklin Akbari reminds us, the East-West binary, while essentialist and reductive to modern readers, was the binary that the Western Middle Ages constructed in order to imagine both itself and its relations to non-Europeans.⁹² In a variety of vernacular texts, from dream visions to encyclopedias to travel literature to *Fürstenspiegel*, Aristotle's appearance alerts us to the difficulty of maintaining these strict divisions, in part because the philosopher signifies the sometimes disavowed common ground between these cultures. He is a figure who generates symmetries between East and West in the divinely inspired nature of his works—the narrative of his potential salvation or even his quasisainthood makes such symmetries unavoidable—and, yet, these similarities raise the question of how, precisely, Western Christian traditions can claim, and maintain, authority in relation to its antecedents. More so than other classical examples of the just pagan, Aristotle activates this doubt most acutely because he is simultaneously at the heart of the medieval West's idea of its own modernity—the arts curriculum that provided the hermeneutic tools to the theological curriculum—and a figure for the problematic pagan past, often imagined in terms of the exotic East.

The iterability of Aristotle in the late medieval literary imagination would render him an unstable sign in late medieval vernacular writings, even as his authority would license a model of counsel for Christian kings as well as a vernacular template for those writers who discerned, in the regularity of nature, a foundation for their own ethical visions. His omnipresence guaranteed that the Aristotelian "reader's house" was to become a place from which writers would continue to argue over the moral force of nature for the remainder of the medieval period. Weighing in on the state of Aristotle's soul had become code for partisan intervention in these ongoing debates over whether sensory perception could be a proper route to divine knowledge, whether a fallen faculty could provide access to a transcendent creator.

That a salutary role for sensual experience can only be imagined when displaced onto the dying body of an already long-dead pagan alerts us to the controversy surrounding arguments over natural philosophy. As we have seen, such disagreements were given a particular scholastic form by the discussions in Paris in the 1270s. It is no coincidence then, as I will argue in the next chapter, that this would be the time—and the place—in which Jean de Meun gave a voice to these debates in vernacular poetry.

PART II

CHAPTER 3

took many forms. Must the element of air always rise and earth always sink? Must animals obey the dictates of their respective natures? These are questions of natural necessity. But questions of theological necessity also arose and answers to these questions were far more confounding: What, if anything, governs human decision making? How can such decisions be considered truly free in light of God's eternal knowledge of them? In asking such questions, scholastics were forced to consider whether or not natural and theological necessities are governed by similar rules. If so, what are those rules? If not, how best to characterize the differences between them?

Within the university, arts and theology masters disagreed with increasing ferocity over the answers, a philosophical debate whose political and rhetorical stakes have been outlined in the previous chapter. These problems were not to remain solely within university walls; they entered popular poetry with the Parisian cleric Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Roman de la Rose* (ca. 1270s), a popular dream vision that contains the first sustained consideration of Nature's powers in the vernacular.¹ The *Roman de la Rose*, begun around 1230 and left unfinished by a certain Guillaume de Lorris, was quadrupled in size by Jean's addition of some sixteen thousand lines. Jean's continuation contains an extended discussion between Nature and her confessor Genius, allegorical figures adapted from Alan of Lille's *De planctu naturae* (ca. 1160s) but enlisted to very different ends by the philosophically minded Jean. The discussion between Jean's Nature and Genius, ostensibly about the problems posed by human sexuality for natural law, touches on one of the most controversial issues surrounding necessity: whether or not *inclinatio* and *dispositio* function in the same way in both the human and the nonhuman worlds. Some thirteenth-century scholastics (such as Bonaventure and the bishop of Paris Étienne Tempier) argued that they did not; others (such as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas) argued that they could, in some cases, if not in all. It is this problem of natural necessity that Jean de Meun introduces into vernacular literature: he does so by redefining nature with reference to a constellation of terms—inclination, natural appetite, free will, nurture, and custom—that had become rallying cries in the pitched battle over how the human will operates with respect to the external forces that attempt to exert pressure on it.

A notoriously dialogic (some would say discordant) work, the *Rose* offers several perspectives on this problem, some of them markedly opposed to Nature's own understanding of her role and abilities. Earlier in the poem, the figure of La Vieille, the duenna who offers the dreamer some notably expedient advice on how to secure his beloved rosebud, argues that all humans seek out sex on account of an inherent impulse. Natural law, she insists, directs everyone to pursue sexual fulfillment just as other animals do; women are particularly unable to resist this impulse, even if nurture or habit dictates otherwise. When Nature herself addresses the same topic later in the poem, she asserts the opposing view: no matter how strong natural

inclination or celestial influence, a person can always resist them through good moral teaching and virtuous discipline. We choose our actions freely, and it is this freedom, according to Nature, that guarantees the merit or demerit that accrues from our behavior.

Judging between these opposing viewpoints would initially seem to be a fairly straightforward case: the reader should discount the views of the amoral duenna, a misogynistic stereotype of unregulated female desire who justifies promiscuity as “natural,” and instead embrace the orthodox view of the supremacy of the will voiced by Nature herself, a learned *magistra* in the cosmographical tradition. Yet this seemingly clear-cut opposition belies the complexity of Jean de Meun’s redefinition of nature as necessity and the multiple perspectives we are offered on *inclinatio* and human will in the latter part of the poem. For, like La Vieille, Nature is represented as a familiar misogynistic stereotype: the changeable woman who can neither keep silent nor, when she insists on speaking at length, order her speech. Nature’s insistence on the contingency of the human will contrasts not just with the determinist views of the salty duenna but also with those of her confessor Genius, who is called “god and master of places” (l. 16256, “des leus ... dex et mestres”). Associated with an Aristotelian determinism—one that works according to the charisma of physical location—he is a figure for natural necessity, that which occurs because it cannot be otherwise. According to Genius and La Vieille, Nature is the most reliable and powerful of forces; according to Nature herself, however, these powers are negligible in comparison with those of human volition.

The competing models of nature articulated by La Vieille, Genius, and Nature herself, while they engage with the contemporary university debate over natural philosophy outlined in previous chapters, do not just echo the terms of this debate; much less do these competing voices resolve themselves into an easy affirmation of one doctrinal position over another. Instead, the poem engages in several thought experiments simultaneously: What if our behavior is largely determined by natural influences, and humans are therefore inherently similar to animals in this way (the position suggested by both La Vieille and Genius at different points in the poem)? Or, conversely, what if the will is radically uncaused and undetermined, and, consequently, we have virtually no necessary connection with the rest of the natural world (as Nature asserts)? This chapter explores Nature’s prominent and unsettling role in the *Roman de la Rose*, beginning with the problem of her voice. To what extent does the embodiment of this voice affirm or undermine its metaphysical claims about embodiment? The next section elaborates on how these claims participate in contemporary academic discussions of necessity. As I will argue, the poem enacts the contradictions that arise from trying to imagine human free will as a nonnecessitated exception to the natural order (the contingent view espoused by Jean’s Nature as well as conservative theologians in the 1270s) and, simultaneously,

as subject to the necessary reproductive urges that govern the rest of the world (the view of Genius and, in a weaker version, scholastics such as Aquinas). The *Rose's* representation of nature (and Nature) suggests that sexual and moral disorder may originate, not in flawed human choices alone, but in the more general (and therefore more pernicious) human ambition to partition off freedom of action from the laws of inclination that guide the rest of the sublunary world, a split dramatized in the uneasy relation between Nature as an advocate for the utter contingency of human and divine wills, on the one hand, and Genius as a figure for the inexorable inclination of the human will, on the other. Yet the argument presented here is not that the *Roman de la Rose* is merely the medieval equivalent of a modern academic roman à clef. By importing these scholastic arguments about necessity into popular poetry, Jean raises a pressing aesthetic problem that is addressed at the chapter's end: What underwrites the ethical effect of a poet's allegorical practice here in this world if neither natural nor theological necessity is found to have a sure purchase? What guarantees that poetry, as a form of *doctrine* and *nourriture*, can decisively combat an inclination to sin, the human *meurs naturex*?

Nature's Lament: Ataxia, Antifeminism, and Aristotle's Natural Philosophy

Jean's Nature is to be found in her forge, industriously hammering out individual creatures to ensure the perpetuation of all variety of species. She combats death by producing like from like; while singular creatures may die, the universal genus is renewed through Nature's work. Jean's Nature claims that God has chosen her for his "chamberiere" (handmaid), "por connetable ou por vicaire" (for his deputy or for his vicar) in charge of the golden chain that binds the four elements and all the creatures of the sublunary world.² Taking a break from her incessant forging, Nature mourns humanity's disobedience to her divinely sanctioned rule and seeks out her confessor, Genius, in order to share her sorrow at having created such a perverse creature. The ensuing discussion between Nature and Genius takes place near the poem's end; at almost five thousand lines, it is one of the longest episodes in this multi-episodic poem, occurring just as the dream narrator is about to consummate his erotic longing.

In her insightful discussion of Natura as a goddess figure, Barbara Newman observes that the personified deity's "chief concern is with the production of bodies," and thus she "is linked from the start with sexual behavior."³ As Newman rightly suggests, the tradition at large frames her role in this way. What is unusual about Jean's Lady Nature, however, is just how little attention she pays to specifically sexual behaviors in her

monologue. Moreover, it is not immediately apparent why Jean personifies Nature at such length nor why this personification appears where it does in the poem's overall structure. In a dream vision about a lover seeking his beloved rosebud, Nature's monologue, with its logical hair-splitting and a technical vocabulary drawn heavily from *sophisma* and quodlibetal debate, brings the drama of the amatory pursuit (such as it is) to a halt.⁴ Its overt scholastic rhetoric also differs from the poem's previous monologues—those of Reason, the Friend, and La Vieille—which read more as amatory counsel delivered in the form of exempla, anecdotes all designed to sway the lover to undertake various courses of action. Nature, by contrast, does not address the lover's situation directly, much less does she offer him any useful advice as to what he should do. For this reason, an earlier generation of scholars often labeled Nature's monologue a digression; however, since at least the time of Gérard Paré, this episode has been imagined as central to understanding the poem's philosophical aims.⁵

While agreeing on its centrality, critics since Paré have tended to disagree about what, precisely, the episode means, though many agree that its primary function seems to be satiric in nature. Jean's depiction of Lady Nature has long been recognized as a direct response to Alan of Lille's earlier vision of the divine deputy depicted in *De planctu naturae*. While critics such as Winthrop Wetherbee have stressed the similarities between the Lady Natures of Alan and Jean, others have labeled Jean's Nature a parody of Alan's dignified deity.⁶ This designation is understandable: gone is Alan's magisterial figure—one who lectures the confused dreamer, sternly but serenely, on God's plan for humanity—only to be replaced by a verbose and, at times, seemingly capricious Nature—one whose disordered monologue seems to reflect the disordered state of humanity rather than to enact a reformation of it. An emphasis on Nature's ataxia has led other critics to see her as a caricature of scholastic notions of *ordinatio* more generally, particularly those associated with learned and popular encyclopedism. The title that Jean himself gave to the poem was "Mirour aux amoureux," and Alan Gunn was the first to elaborate the poem's affinities with the *speculum* tradition more widely, claiming that Jean's goal was to achieve a similarly universalizing effect in his continuation.⁷ Jean's abbreviated, poetic enumerations have been dubbed "impatient encyclopedism" by E. C. Ronquist, who notes that it is an exercise in voicing whose success depends on the reader's familiarity with an earlier tradition of the universal encyclopedia; this voicing has, in turn, been carefully analyzed by Mary Franklin-Brown, who concludes that Nature's speech fundamentally undermines the encyclopedic project, calling attention "to the artificiality and limitations of any verbal description of the world, to the gulf dividing words and things."⁸

While acknowledging that this episode engages critically both with Alan of Lille's largely idealizing moral vision and with the formal structures of

medieval encyclopedism, my own argument is that Jean's Nature is conspicuously fashioned to intervene in a contemporary political contest over whether human ethics can have a basis in nature as well as to show that this political debate has aesthetic consequences, poetic effects that I will outline at the chapter's end. In regard to the ethical politics of Nature's speech, previous critics have documented the scholastic genealogies of several aspects of Nature's philosophy. Among an earlier generation of scholars, Paré and Pierre-Yves Badel argue that her speech embodies an orthodox understanding of human and divine wills consonant with that found in Boethius's *Consolatio*, a text that Jean himself had translated into the vernacular. Others find Nature's presentation to be far from mainstream; F. W. Müller and Alan Gunn contend that the poet shared the views of the so-called radical Aristotelian fringe exemplified by Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia.⁹ More recently, critics have moved away from the question of Jean's orthodoxy to discuss the nuances of Jean's engagement with particular philosophical questions. In one of the most compelling readings of this section of the poem, Daniel Heller-Roazen explores Jean's Nature in terms of twelfth-century accounts of chance and free will, arguing that the poem does not merely echo Boethius, but instead responds to these later scholastic refinements of Boethian doctrine.¹⁰ I will return to these critical accounts in more detail in the next section, but before we address Nature's philosophical investments, we must first examine her characterization as a scholastic *magistra* who speaks in counterfactuals and who introduces her powers, not through straightforward self-description, but rather through a series of scholastic arguments *pro* and *contra*.

A cosmographic *procreatrix*, Nature describes her domain simultaneously as obedient to her will and as chaotically contingent; this discursive habit makes Nature's account of her rule seem, at best, comically inconsistent or, at worst, philosophically incoherent. A rhetorical set piece, Nature's speech unfolds as a cascade of averted lamentation: "Du ciel ne me doi je pas pleindre, ... Ne ne me plaing des .VII. planetes.... Ne ne me plain des elemanz.... Si ne me plain mie des plantes.... Ne des oiseaus ne des poissons ..." (I should not complain of the heavens, ... nor do I complain of the seven planets.... I do not complain about the elements.... Neither do I complain of the plants ... nor of the birds or the fish ...).¹¹ She (repeatedly) does not complain of the cosmic and nonhuman worlds because they follow their respective natural inclinations; it is mankind alone that rebels against her laws. As Mary Franklin-Brown has deftly shown, this long passage incorporates within it much information about the natural world taken from earlier encyclopedias such as Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum naturale*.¹² Nature's enumerative style would therefore raise an encyclopedic "horizon of expectation," to borrow Hans Robert Jauss's phrase, only to frustrate it.¹³ Since the point of Nature's elaborate *apophasis* is to show the obedience of the created world to the divine will, it is striking that the actual examples

offered by Nature suggest the disruption of the natural order. The skies of which she does not complain are full of tempests and wind storms; the clouds of which she does not complain weep so copiously that rivers overflow their banks, displacing fish and damaging the human world (ll. 17855–950); the dumb beasts of which she does not complain would rise up against their human masters in rebellion and slaughter were they to possess sentience (ll. 17763–844). Its putatively taxonomic structure in shambles, the relentless paratactic stream of Nature’s monologue overflows its own rhetorical boundaries, threatening to drown the reader just as the anecdotal floodwaters overwhelm neighboring towns.

In transgressing its own *ordinatio*, Nature’s discourse in the *Rose* is a prime example of medieval antifeminism, an antifeminism to which Genius has already given voice. As Nature’s confessor, Genius had encouraged the goddess to admit her cares, though his “encouragement” takes the form of an antifeminist rant—an almost four-hundred-line digression—describing how women are inconstant, prone to wrath, and unable to keep a secret.¹⁴ Nature’s miscellaneous “confession” thus serves to characterize her as a fickle woman subject to irrational impulses, a mutable female in need of masculine principles of order, as critics such as Sarah Kay have rightly suggested.¹⁵

The episode’s misogyny, though, also has a recognizably philosophical dimension. Nature’s markedly Neoplatonic views (described in more detail below) would lead a reader to expect a magisterial Nature, a cosmographical figure who veils her face and refuses to divulge her mysteries to prying human eyes. Instead, we are given a Nature who cannot stop talking, one who compulsively reveals all. Jean’s Nature is an ironic inversion of that well-known Neoplatonic topos of the secretive Nature documented by William Eamon and Pierre Hadot.¹⁶ When, following her long digression on mirrors and optics, she begins to expound on the different types of visions, she momentarily stops short to reflect,

bon fet prolixité foïr.
Si sunt fames mout annuieuses
et de parler contrarieuses.

(It is a good thing to flee prolixity; just so, women are very
troublesome and contrary about talking.)¹⁷

Similarly, toward the end of her monologue she echoes Genius’s earlier warnings by declaring:

Fame sui, si ne me puis tere
ainz veill des ja tout reveler,
car fame ne peut riens celer.

(I am a woman and cannot keep silent; from now on I want to reveal everything, for a woman can hide nothing.)¹⁸

This is less the medieval literary equivalent of Stockholm syndrome than a dramatic irony whose humor and trenchancy arise from having a transcendent Nature, one defined not as an inherent principle of Aristotelian growth and change but rather as the Neoplatonic guardian of secrets, disavow her own ability to keep a secret. Surely a great part of the humor here arises from the fact that Nature herself participates so enthusiastically in the episode's antifeminism.

As R. Howard Bloch has argued, medieval antifeminism was above all a question of voice, the framing of a subject position that would have been recognizable and inhabitable by a particular segment of the audience.¹⁹ In suggesting that much of the humor in Nature's voice derives from its philosophical positioning, my argument also assumes a male, university-trained reader as the ideal audience imagined by Jean for this section of his poem. Such a reader is amply documented in the influential work of Sylvia Huot on the *Rose's* manuscript tradition. Huot identifies multiple audiences for the *Rose*—some more interested in the Ovidian erotics of love, others more interested in its philosophical interventions—and she has shown that the academic reader was most likely to engage actively with Jean's text by interpolating, extending, or annotating it with citations of canon law, for instance, or even with the relevant references to Jean's own translation of Boethius's *Consolatio philosophiae*.²⁰ In his discussion of the poem's climactic scenes, A. J. Minnis concurs that the poem's phallocentric humor is "utterly mainstream," by which he means characteristic of "a world without women," those university circles in which the text was written and often consumed.²¹ This is not to deny that the romance had a much broader audience of lay readers, many aristocratic and many women, who responded in complex ways to the poem as a vernacular dream vision. Indeed, Nature's speech anticipates this plural audience, even as, in the Nature episode, it plays to a particular segment of it.

For a clerical audience, Nature occupied a recognizably hybrid, antifeminist subject position—that of the female *magister*, the garrulous philosopher—and the unstable voice that issues from this problematic body would speak a yet more profoundly troubling philosophical dissonance. In her voice, we hear the fundamental incompatibility of Aristotelian explanations of natural phenomena with cosmographical Platonic ones. Perhaps the most striking aspect of Nature's encyclopedic compendium is that it constantly raises the specter of the "new" Aristotelian science only to veer sharply away from it. Nature seems reluctant to delve too deeply into natural philosophy, preferring instead mythographic explanations to physically causal ones. In this way, Jean's Nature rejects syncretic accounts of the natural world such as those found in some thirteenth-century

encyclopedias as well as in Aristotelian spuria such as *De pomo*, texts that often foregrounded what the two systems shared in common.²² To take just one example of this tendency, Nature voices skepticism of the particularly Aristotelian mode of parsing the natural world when she dutifully mentions him as an authority on the rainbow.²³ Nature's anthropomorphizing description of the rainbow—the rainbow is what happens when the clouds, the sky's retainers, go hunting—would have seemed quaint to an educated audience of university students familiar with recent theories explaining the refraction of water droplets (such as those put forward in Robert Grosseteste's *De iride*).²⁴ After expanding on this mythographic understanding of celestial occurrences, Nature observes, almost as an afterthought, that those who wish to know about rainbows could also consult Alhazen's *Optics*, an early eleventh-century Arabic treatise that had only recently become available in a Latin translation.²⁵

While Nature is clearly aware of the latest science, she prefers mythographic explanations for the operations of the visible world. Her description of rainbows as celestial shooting parties ends with Nature observing that if one wants a physically causal description of this natural phenomenon,

li convandroit prandre cure
d'estre deciples Aristote,
qui mieuz mist natures en note
que nus hon puis le tans Caïn.

(One would have to take the trouble to be a disciple of
Aristotle, who made better inventories of nature than any
man from the time of Cain.)²⁶

This backhanded compliment associates causal theories of natural philosophy with the embodiment of fratricidal fallen nature. Such a casually dismissive attitude toward Aristotle is also found in the long digression on optics that follows: Nature invokes the wondrous technologies of mirrors to which

Aristotes neïs tesmoigne,
qui bien sot de ceste besoigne,
car toute sciance avoit chiere.

(Aristotle himself bears witness, he who knew well about this
necessary matter, because he valued all knowledge).²⁷

Having invoked Aristotle, Nature then declines to give the scientific details of reflection and refraction, since “tout est ailleurs escrit an livre” (everything is written elsewhere in a book).²⁸ Such books would have

included treatises by Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon, natural philosophical works with which Jean himself appears to have been familiar, according to critics such as Suzanne Akbari and Patricia Eberle.²⁹ For Nature, a brief invocation of this contemporary optical science leads once again to the mythographic: if only Venus and Mars had a magnifying mirror, they would have been able to outsmart the jealous Vulcan by avoiding the trap of fine nets he had set for them. Indeed, the actual mirrors to which Nature briefly alludes are soon transformed into metaphorical vehicles for the ultimate reflecting glass: the divine mirror of providence. When Nature looks at natural phenomena, she prefers the explanatory power of the mythographic veil of metaphor (rainbows are the bows of celestial hunters) to that of Aristotelian causality (the analytic descriptions characteristic of recent works on refraction). Even though Nature conspicuously draws attention to the existence of Aristotelian natural models, it is not accurate to call her an “Aristotelian” (as some critics do), since, when given the choice, she repeatedly chooses the Neoplatonic, cosmographic option in such a way as to suggest an essential incompatibility between the two.³⁰

Nature’s antifeminist voice reveals not just her own secrets but also a confusion over how to interpret nature in the late thirteenth century. Importantly, her monologue goes on to show that this conflict over how best to explain natural phenomena—imagined by her as an either-or proposition—is connected with an increasingly urgent philosophical problem that was preoccupying 1270s Paris: the problem of human exceptionalism. One of the most perplexing aspects of Jean’s personification is the fact that Nature herself disavows so completely her own usual role as a spokesperson for natural inclination, the idea that the world (including man) is subject to her physical and ethical governance. Instead, she repeatedly argues that man is exempt from her rule, exempt not just from the ticktock regularity of earthly cycles but from the whole framework of inclination in which these cycles participate. In inquiring into man’s place in the natural order, Nature dramatizes a set of tensions that were dividing the Parisian clerical community in which Jean wrote. Like Nature, contemporary theologians struggled with the question: what influence can the physical world have on the operations of the human will?

Debating Human Exceptionalism

Necessitas non subditur legi.

—Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*

Necessite hath no lawe.

Less a divine workshop than a university lecture hall, Nature's habitation serves as a place from which she can pronounce with equal authority on the workings of the material world as well as the knotty problem of human free will. Preferring to talk rather than to forge, Jean's Lady Nature begins by revealing the mechanics of the cosmos and the sublunar elements before turning her attention to mankind. At this point, Nature introduces a topic imbued with urgency for her: the place of the human will in the temporal unfolding of events. She devotes approximately eight hundred lines to a discussion of the problems of choice, necessity, and divine providence (ll. 17027–854). Throughout this passage, she repeatedly affirms man's complete freedom of moral choice, a faculty that, she argues, is independent from all celestial as well as divine coercion.

Nature's role as an ardent advocate for the complete freedom of the human will marks a fundamental shift of emphasis from Jean's literary predecessors. In Alan of Lille, for instance, Nature was primarily concerned with policing varieties of sexual desire, prohibiting unnatural, same-sex love as well as channeling heterosexual desire into the socially cohesive and morally licensed vehicle of married love. The topic of natural necessity receives very little attention in Alan's poem: Nature simply states that she doesn't work according to strict necessity, a statement that entails no apparent theological complexity for Alan.³¹ Alan's Nature argues that man was subject to the same natural order as the birds, animals, and plants pictured on her dress; however, man had erroneously made himself an exception to her rule through the misuse of his desire.³² Jean's Nature argues the opposite: man is rightfully exceptional to the natural order through the independent use of his will; his great sin is the failure to recognize his own alterity from the rest of nature. If, for Alan's Nature, mankind does not resemble the animals enough, for Jean's Nature, mankind resembles them too much.

What is more, it is the status of human choice more generally—whether it is conditioned by external promptings, either physical or spiritual—that becomes the focus of Nature's rhetorical energies in Jean, rather than the arguably more narrow problem of sexual regulation that had preoccupied Alan. Jean's extended attention to this broader problem suggests that in the century intervening between the two poems, this issue had become more pressing, as Aristotelian natural philosophy had challenged the idea of Nature as the autonomous vicar translating the divine will into material creations. Jean, in effect, transforms literary Nature: no longer a symbol for the particular problem of sexual governance, she will come to stand for the more universal question of how human agency functions in the world.

Then as now, the problem of human exceptionalism is one facet of the

philosophical problem of free will and determinism. We moderns often think of questions concerning free will as falling squarely within the purview of ethics; for late medieval writers, it also fell under the rubric of physics. Both modern and medieval scientists posit an analogy between the laws according to which the material universe functions and those governing the immaterial world (whether imagined as soul, mind, or some other noumenal realm). This analogy has always entailed difficulties, since writers regularly disagree about the extent to which these laws overlap. In the later medieval period, both material and immaterial phenomena were seen to obey laws of necessity.³³ Astronomy accounted for the trajectories of these cosmic bodies and their influences (whether pernicious or felicitous), physics for these bodies' effects on the sublunar elements, and faculty psychology for the elements' influence on the humoral makeup of individuals. In each of these realms, place was causally dispositive: the location of a planet at one's birth determined one's humoral disposition, which, in turn, influenced personality traits, health, and longevity. A body was susceptible to the pull of its disparate elements—fire, air, earth, and water—and was thus determined to some extent by its environment. Medieval scholastics vigorously debated the extent of these influences as well as the mechanisms that governed them. They did so in the arts faculty as well as in the theology faculty, since the question of how planetary influence exerts itself in mankind often led to the related question of whether God controls physical affairs directly or indirectly.

In the modern university, by contrast, questions of physical causality are in general discussed within the sciences, while human motivation is parsed in psychology labs and humanities seminar rooms. Yet these disciplinary divisions belie the fact that material forces are still imagined to impinge on the mental realm in direct ways. Modern quantum theory, reacting against the perceived determinism of the relativistic physics of Newton and Einstein, attempts to do away with local theories of causation, a revision that has led some physicists to argue that the randomness underlying quantum theories of particle behavior analogously suggests a corresponding free will in humans, what physicist Roger Penrose has called “non-algorithmic rationality.”³⁴ The prevalence of such theories of causation, from Aristotle to quantum physics, suggests that the struggle to understand free will forces both physicists and theologians to choose from among several competing options: to assume that the human world operates according to the same fundamental laws as the rest of the cosmos (determinism); to assume that human free will functions contrary to these laws and that they do not have universal application (exceptionalism); or, finally, to assume that the human will is influenced by physical laws but that it is free in the last instance (compatibilism).

This brief comparison between medieval and modern physics is meant to suggest that it remains difficult to think the rules governing the physical

world without thinking the rules governing the human, whether because one imagines the human to occupy a privileged and, hence, transcendent place with regard to the rest of the physical world or, conversely, because one believes that the human is an embedded subset of this world. Importantly, the understanding of necessity bequeathed to modern physics was a medieval rather than classical one. The inexorable wheels of natural motion were, for Aristotle, greased by the oil of necessity. Since all actions were directed toward their ends, they occurred according to causal exigency.³⁵ What precisely “necessity” meant and what fell under its domain was discussed in scholastic commentaries on Aristotle’s logic and metaphysics, as well as on the *Physics* and the rest of the *libri naturales*. It was in these commentaries that the concept of will as *liberum arbitrium* was elaborated, since, for Aristotle, reason, not will, was the defining feature of the human.³⁶ Over the course of the late Middle Ages, theories of necessity were outlined in several domains: legal, theological, scientific, and, as this chapter argues, poetic. The broad reach of necessity raised several inescapable philosophical questions for scholastics: How necessary is necessary? What governs necessity? Was the human exempt from necessity? Was God himself? Largely unknown in classical writings, the medieval proverb “necessitas non habet legem” (necessity has no law) echoed throughout these debates. This koan-like pronouncement originated in medieval canon law as a way of justifying behavior otherwise inexplicable: theft or even murder could be excused were the defendant found to be in extremis. Aquinas, in his consideration of the status of human as opposed to divine law, affirms that, unlike its human counterpart, divine mandate is never subject to exemptions of necessity.³⁷ The pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum*, the popular handbook of princely advice on topics that ranged from monarchical politics to everyday diet, invokes this phrase to describe those physical imperatives that must be followed when they cannot be mastered.³⁸ Even a prince can be compelled by his material needs. In such cases, necessity is a strict master, governed by no master other than himself. Unsurprisingly, discussions of physical necessity often centered on sexuality as learned and popular writers debated whether or not sexual desire necessitates humans to act according to their inclinations. While most scholastic writers affirm that passion could largely be overcome through reason or faith (or a combination of the two), it was difficult to reconcile this interpretation with the imperatives of a physical *inclinatio* that was often imagined to have no law. While the rational mind was inclined to the good (chastity), inclinations inherent in matter itself often led the physical body elsewhere. It is at this point that love and physics intersect, and it is from this heavily trafficked intersection that Jean’s Lady Nature speaks.

The logic of Nature’s discussion of human choice repays careful consideration, since it reveals how the poetic representation of the visible world is connected to the scholastic controversy over the problem of the

will. The medieval period recognized several concentric rings of necessity: natural necessity (earthly laws of motion and inclination), astronomical necessity (the planetary influences that govern the sublunary realm), and theological necessity (questions surrounding human free will and divine omnipotence). Nature's views on many aspects of these three types of necessity, taken individually, initially appear to be theologically unremarkable in the moment at which Jean is writing. Nature, for instance, rejects the "law of necessity" in the form of astro-determinism, the idea that the stars or planets dispose people to certain deeds or beliefs in an inexorable way. Nature is particularly concerned with the problem that unlearned people succumb to a belief in astrological destinies predicted by the stars at the moment of their birth. Such constellations were thought to predict not just the shape of a life but also its end. Nature assumes that laypeople, when faced with the paradox of how planetary influence can exist side by side with free will, err on the side of assuming that their lives lack contingency, that their own choices count for nothing, and that even the day and manner of their death is assigned to them from the moment of conception through "droite nécessité, / Sanz autre possibilité" (ll. 17035–36). The idea of "droite nécessité"—"strict" or "pure" necessity as exercised by the heavens—was just the most extreme manifestation of a belief in the regularity of physical laws. Rejecting this variety of fatalism was a predominant philosophical concern, one that was common both to Aristotelians—Aquinas deploys it in his *Summa contra gentiles* (ca. 1270)—and to Augustinians—Étienne Tempier, the bishop of Paris, consistently condemns this view, first in 1270 and then again in 1277.

By the time that Jean is writing, however, astro-determinism had also become part of a theologically conservative attack on Aristotle that associated the pagan philosopher with a providential fatalism. No friend of the fatalist, Aristotle believed that free choice was essential to guarantee moral behavior. Without it, there would be no sense to the rhythm of our normal activities, for "negotari nec consiliari," for doing business or seeking counsel, as Aristotle writes in *De interpretatione*.³⁹ And yet theologians hostile to the application of natural philosophical reasoning to theological issues consistently framed Aristotle as the source of a potentially dangerous determinism. In his *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* (ca. 1273), a series of lectures on the six days of creation, Bonaventure claims that Aristotle believes (in the interpretation of his Arab interpreters):

quod occultatur veritas divinae providentiae et praescientiae,
si non omnia in ipso distincta sunt. Unde dicunt illi quod
Deus nihil scit particulariter et quod nulla veritas de futuro
est nisi necessitatis, et sic auferretur praescientia et oportet
poni quod omnia fiant casu; ideo necessario inducitur fatum,
ut tenent Arabes, scilicet illum errorem quod illae substantiae

moventes orbem sint causae omnium.

(... that the truth of divine providence and foreknowledge is hidden, since all things are not distinct within God. They also say that God does not have knowledge of particulars, and, because no truths concerning the future are without necessity, therefore providence is destroyed and it is necessary to suppose that all things are brought about by chance; for that reason, the ordained thing is determined by necessity, as the Arabs conclude. That error is clear because [they believe] those substances that move the sphere are the cause of all things.)⁴⁰

This passage reveals the logic of how astrodeterminism leads to the problem of providential fatalism: if one believes oneself to be subject to the ineluctable influence of celestial bodies, then free will is illusory; such a belief also vitiates divine omniscience and omnipotence, taking away God's ability to know and direct future outcomes. While this is not an accurate summary of Aristotle's views in *De interpretatione*, Bonaventure's summary allows him to accuse Aristotle and his Arab commentators of an unnuanced belief in the absolute predictive value of the stars, a belief that would conflict with Christian providence. Why attribute these views to Aristotle? Bonaventure may well have been responding to the threat posed by the radical Aristotelians Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia, Parisian arts masters who championed an intellectualist version of the will, one wherein the ends of ethical happiness (instilled by God) determined moral virtues.⁴¹ Bonaventure's condemnation of Aristotle could also be seen as a broadside against a Thomist insistence that Aristotelian natural philosophy provides a compatible framework within which to view the relations between human and divine wills.

In Jean's continuation of the *Rose*, Nature's discussion of fatalism follows the cultural logic laid out by Bonaventure: her objections to astrodeterminism segue into a rebuttal of providential fatalism, though she does not, at this point in her monologue, mention Aristotle by name. Whereas Bonaventure was clearly worried about a learned class of Aristotelian sympathizers within the university, Nature suggests that it is laypeople who embrace these varieties of fatalism when faced with a difficult metaphysical problem: How to reconcile a belief in an omniscient deity—one who invariably knows the future—with the exercise of free will—the endless flow of seemingly contingent acts performed every day? Like almost all late thirteenth-century theologians, Nature refutes the idea that divine knowledge of human action implies a determinate causality, framing her position in terms familiar from Boethius's *Consolatio philosophiae*, arguably the most popular medieval treatise on the problem of human choice and its consequences.⁴² Invoking the form of a quodlibetal question in

university disputation, Nature argues vigorously in favor of free will by imagining a series of challenges to it. She posits a devil's advocate who argues that God's will does, in fact, coerce human action, since knowledge of a true event must be necessary knowledge:

Et diroit de chose possible,
combien qu'el puisse estre fallible,
au mains quant ele est avenue:
"S'aucuns l'avoit devant veüe
et deïst: tel chose sera
ne riens ne l'an destournera,
n'avroit il pas dit verité?
Donc seroit ce neccessité,
car il s'ansuit, se chose est vaire,
donques est ele ncessaire,
par la convertibilité
de voir et de neccessité.
Don convient il qu'el soit a force,
Quant neccessité s'an efforce."

(Then, about some possible thing, however unlikely, [the fatalist] would say, at least when it happened, "if anyone had foreseen it and said, 'Such a thing will be, and nothing will deflect it,' wouldn't he have told the truth? Thus this would be necessity. For it follows, from the interchangeability of truth and necessity, that if a thing is true, then it is necessary. Hence a thing must perforce be when it is constrained by necessity.")⁴³

Nature's imaginary adversary believes in a particular law of necessity, one that was discussed in modal logic under the category of future contingents.⁴⁴ Boethius attempted to solve this logical and epistemological problem by parsing the idea of necessity itself. One has to distinguish, he says, between simple necessity—which can be true of an entity in perpetuity, such as an ascription of heat to the sun—as opposed to conditional necessity imposed by the fact that the statement is true relative to the time at which it takes place—the necessity of the present. Jean's Nature, following Boethius, distinguishes between simple necessity ("necessité simple," l. 17198) and conditional necessity ("necessitez en regart," l. 17199).⁴⁵ Simple necessity describes an attribute true at all times ("all men are rational"), while conditional necessity describes an attribute true only at a certain time or under certain conditions ("Socrates is sitting"). Boethius's well-known solution to the problem of how God knows, but does not cause, human actions was to attribute it to "conditional necessity"—the belief that, since all things are present to God simultaneously and outside of time, God knows

what we will do but his knowledge does not foreordain our choice. Boethius explains this theory through a well-known analogy: just as when we see a man sitting, our knowledge does not influence the man's (previous) decision about whether to stand or sit, so too divine knowledge is merely an accurate recorder of an autonomous human act.⁴⁶ Nature, again following Boethius, believes that God's foreknowledge is based on conditional necessity, where he truly knows what will happen because it is, in effect, happening before him in his timeless present.

Boethius's writings on the will, briefly summarized here, have been recognized as central to understanding Lady Nature since the foundational work of Gérard Paré, who contends that Jean's intention in this episode is simply to affirm a Boethian understanding of providence.⁴⁷ It is certainly true that Nature borrows the terms of her debate from Boethius; however, she also introduces arguments drawn from thirteenth-century refinements to the Boethian understanding made in the wake of modal logic. These seemingly hairsplitting logical arguments were necessary because Boethius's solution did not fully satisfy his scholastic commentators, since "to square human freedom with divine foreknowledge is not yet to square it with divine providence."⁴⁸ In effect, the question of knowing is one of God's intellect, whereas the question of whether or not a given event will occur is a question of God's will. Boethius explained the epistemological part of the puzzle but left the question of the potentially causal nature of God's volition unresolved. The fascinating question of how a created creature can will something independently of its creator remained perplexing.

Jean's handling of the problem of contingency with respect to God's knowledge has been richly parsed by Daniel Heller-Roazen, who argues that Nature's contingency aligns her with that other figure of cosmic fickleness within the *Rose*, Fortune. Heller-Roazen shows how Nature's language draws, not just on the *Consolatio philosophiae*, but on eleventh- and twelfth-century writings on providence such as Anselm of Canterbury's treatise on free will (ca. 1080s) and Peter Lombard's treatment of this problem in his *Sentences* (ca. 1155–57), arguably the most commented upon text in the university curriculum next to Aristotle. These theologians offered nuanced accounts of how one could, in Daniel Heller-Roazen's words, maintain "the determinacy of contingency with respect to divine knowledge and, at the same time, its indeterminacy with respect to human action."⁴⁹ The *Rose*'s engagement with these theological models is translated into its formal frame: what at first appear to be digressions are, in fact, a necessary part of the poem's philosophical structure. However, this seemingly neat formal and intellectual solution is, according to Heller-Roazen, complicated by Jean's next narrative move: the theological imperative of God's eternal knowledge is transformed into the poetic image of a "mirouer pardurable," an "everlasting mirror," without which God cannot see the shape of providence. The necessary presence of this mirror suggests that the orthodox model of

will and divine knowledge needs a supplement in order to make it work. This unusual figure, according to Heller-Roazen, not only unsettles the Boethian sureties of the preceding scholastic argument, it also metapoetically directs the reader's attention away from God and back to the *Rose* itself, an encyclopedic mirror whose moral is "the simultaneous fortuitousness and irrevocability of the poetic work."⁵⁰

The argument about Nature's philosophical stance that follows builds upon the genealogy of contingency so carefully excavated by Heller-Roazen: Nature's arguments engage these earlier scholastic distinctions but, I suggest, they respond most directly to the academic arguments about free will and necessity that were taking place in the more proximate philosophical environment of the 1260s and 1270s Paris in which Jean was writing. This theological "eruption" in the midst of the *Rose*'s catalog of the natural world would have been understood by Jean's learned audience as a gloss on contemporary university controversy about licit as opposed to illicit ways of articulating earthly necessity in relation to divine knowledge. Unlike Heller-Roazen who sees this episode as ultimately about poetics rather than theology, I see it as directing our attention to the ways in which these two practices share a similar investment in determining the question of how encompassing nature's necessity actually was. The vehement antipathy toward necessity expressed by Lady Nature offers another window onto both academic and aesthetic debates, as Nature is shown to be not just an orthodox believer in the supremacy of human free will but an advocate for a radical contingency of the will: she is an exceptional human exceptionalist.

Nature's Freedom

Jean's Lady Nature believes that the will is always uncaused, that nothing can potentially influence it in any substantive way. Nature's sorrow over having created man stems from mankind's lack of faith in his own powers of volition, his ability to act in any way he chooses, his independence not just from planetary influence but also from Nature's own dictates. Once Nature has laid out the Boethian case for self-determination, she returns to emphasize the truly contingent nature of the human will:

Doit l'an plainemant nier
que les euvres d'humanité
avieignent par nécessité;
ainz font bien ou mal franchement
par leur vouloir tant seulement.

(One should completely deny that the works of humanity

happen by necessity. Instead people do good or evil freely through their will alone.)⁵¹

For Jean's Lady Nature there is no "law of necessity"; there is only limitless liberty. In her subsequent discussion of what constitutes true nobility, Nature argues that her most beautiful gift to mankind is "naturel franchise"—the natural freedom that she has given to each person equally and that makes them most closely resemble God and the angels.⁵² The significant point here is that, according to Nature, the will works "tant seurement," all alone.

While Nature's commitment to the absoluteness of human choice may sound, from a historical distance, unexceptional or even banal, it was anything but in the context of late thirteenth-century debate over Aristotelian ways of knowing the world. One of the most striking features of Nature's monologue is the virulence with which she argues against her own traditionally assigned power, the force of natural inclination. Nature's primary tool, according to Aristotle, is necessity: "action for an end is present in things which come to be and are by nature."⁵³ As Amos Funkenstein has observed, most late medieval scholastics accepted the basic principles of the Aristotelian worldview that things operated according to causes and inclinations, though they also insisted on the caveat that God could, at any time and in any way, modify the existing rules of the universe.⁵⁴ In arguing that humans are influenced by nothing outside of themselves ("rien for eus," l. 17233), Nature redefines the essence of the human as volitional freedom; in doing so, she destabilizes her very identity. If Nature no longer works toward an end, what governs her creative powers? More important, what guarantees her moral authority? For Jean's Lady Nature, freedom is another word for everything left to lose.

Nature's ardent advocacy of free choice situates her in the center of a recognizably late thirteenth-century debate over the will that was taking place in Paris, a debate that was in part a referendum on Aristotelian ways of understanding human psychology. This debate revolved around the precise relation of a constellation of terms—*ratio* (reason), *voluntas* (will), *electio* (choice), and *liberum arbitrium* (freedom of judgment)—all of which were seen to constitute what was truly human, even if different writers chose to emphasize one or another term at the expense of the others. This debate had begun in earnest in the first half of the century when Aquinas's teacher Albertus Magnus (ca. 1206–80), the figure largely responsible for ensuring that Aristotelian natural science was taught at the University of Paris, outlined the causal relationship obtaining between the human and natural worlds. While he denounced the strict determinist views embraced by some Greek and Arabic writers, Albertus tried to explain how the will was still influenced, in a mediated way, by external factors such as "heavenly radiations."⁵⁵ Aquinas attempted to resolve the problem of how the external

world affected the mental world by assigning a larger role, not to cosmic influences, but to the intellect. For Aquinas, the intellect was more important than the will in moving us to moral action, because it alone determined the possible ends to which the will could apply itself. The will exercised *electio*; however, it chose from among those options presented to it by the rational faculty, options based in part on sensory perception and cognition. According to Robert Pasnau, this belief makes Aquinas “a compatibilist *avant la lettre*.”⁵⁶ The more “intellectualist” versions of the will promoted by Albertus and Aquinas were soon countered by more “voluntarist” readings developed in response to them in the second half of the thirteenth century. Aquinas’s vision of the will as rational appetite came under attack by Franciscan writers such as Walter of Bruges, Bonaventure, and William de la Mare, who argued not just for the independence of the will but for its superiority over the intellect.⁵⁷ Knowledge of moral laws cannot come through the intellect—that is, through the senses—but instead must come from revelation. According to J. B. Korolec, “eventually it came to be characteristic of Dominican writers to link freedom very closely with reason, and of Franciscan writers to locate *liberum arbitrium* rather in the will.”⁵⁸

This ongoing disagreement between the voluntarists and intellectualists was arbitrated—at least provisionally—by Bishop Tempier in a series of prohibitions issued first in 1270 and then again in 1277. In each, Tempier condemned the Thomist view that will, as an essentially passive faculty, must follow the dictates of reason. The later condemnation greatly expands its concern with how the will operates as well as with how God can know future decisions without coercing them: for instance, one 1277 proposition condemns the belief that all future events happen according to necessity rather than contingency, while another faults the view that divine foreknowledge is a necessary cause of the events so foreknown.⁵⁹ While Tempier cites the errors of Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia in the prologue to his later condemnation, historians such as John F. Wippel have asserted that Tempier’s real aim in these propositions on the will was to disable the Thomist side of the argument, even though Aquinas is never mentioned by name. While historians of philosophy disagree over whether Aquinas was the direct target of Tempier’s inquiry or whether his views simply became collateral damage in the ensuing arguments, it is the case that fully a quarter of the 219 propositions condemned in 1277 can be seen to have a basis in Aquinas’s writings.⁶⁰ In tacitly refuting the Thomist view, the condemnations reinforce the voluntarist double-sided theological coin: the human will is utterly free and contingent, just like the divine will after which it is fashioned. In this matchup, Tempier decisively called the toss for the voluntarist team.

Literary critics have examined the *Rose* in relation to the 1277 condemnation previously, though few have been interested in the problem of the will. Daniel Poirion, for instance, has investigated what the

condemnation has to say on the subjects of both chastity and sexual morality and then read the *Rose* into these texts.⁶¹ In attempting to counter the idea that Jean had naturalistic or “Averroist” leanings, Pierre-Yves Badel rightly points out that the writings of Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia had little to say on the topic of sexuality.⁶² While Tempier’s document had little to say about sensuality or desire, it had much to say about the broader workings of free choice, and this context, I think, is the proper frame for understanding Nature’s views on the will, views that are manifestly similar to the voluntarist views expressed by writers such as Bonaventure and Tempier. Nature does not merely “echo” the positions espoused by these Franciscan writers, however; her monologue is not merely a trickle-down vernacularization of these university ideas. Rather, it offers an active intervention in these debates.

Nature engages in a compelling thought experiment: What would a world constructed according to voluntarist views look like? The major threat to imagining such a world was not the fringe views of radical Aristotelians but the moderate ones of Aquinas. In addressing the problem of the will in language borrowed from this academic controversy, Jean de Meun’s personification of Nature addresses several questions that had attained urgency in the university circles of the 1270s: How is reason related to the will? How does the will work? What role does teleology play in structuring the relation of the human to the natural world? Of mankind to God? Nature’s answers to these questions do not just align her with the orthodox side, they also prove her to be a voluntarist’s voluntarist, one intent on dismantling the compatibilist position associated with Aquinas.

While there are some things that Nature and Aquinas would agree on (that astro-determinism and providential fatalism are to be rejected; that the will plays a central role in choice and action; and that men and women are responsible for the merit or demerit of these choices and actions), there is much that separates them. It is to the most significant points of Nature’s disagreement with the compatibilist position that I will now turn.

Perhaps the most intense area of disagreement between Lady Nature and her imaginary compatibilist opponent is over the question of how natural inclination functions with respect to the human psyche. *Inclinatio*, or, alternately, *dispositio*, was one of the primary philosophical places where human exceptionalism was discussed in the late medieval period. Of central concern to scholastics was whether or not disposition was a kind of necessity.⁶³ Since few in the thirteenth century would have embraced a full-blown Stoic model of disposition as determinism, the argument focused instead on the extent to which inclination could move the will, a proposition that was elaborated at most length by Aquinas. While Jean’s Nature admits that heavenly bodies do exert sublunary pressure (with their “necessaires influences,” l. 17480) and that the elemental nature of earthly bodies endows them with natural dispositions (“naturex complexions,” l. 17488), she goes on

to argue that such dispositions are not particularly strong and can, in any event, be diverted. Sublunary things can avoid (“se deffandent”) these influences either through the intervention of chance or by an act of will (“par cas ou par volanté,” ll. 17500–503). Thus humans are capable of resisting, even as they are tempted to follow where their hearts incline them to go (“ou li queurs s’ancline”); they can successfully withstand those impulses that draw them toward a certain end (“de trere a tel fin,” ll. 17505–6). Natural inclination is here imagined as a menacing, external force against which one can either hope for the best or arm oneself with a virtuous will. For Nature, will is the weapon that thwarts disposition as a mode of biological determinism, and it is this ability to resist that makes the human a happy exception to Nature’s own order.

If Nature imagines the relation of inclination to will as an inherently agonistic one—a battle of the human against inhuman forces—Aquinas envisions the two forces as compatible rather than competing, at least insofar as they were seen to operate in analogous ways. For Nature, the will’s defining feature is its self-determination; for Aquinas, it is defined in terms of rational appetite.⁶⁴ This drive works just like the other natural appetites, and, though free in the last instance, the will is inclined to certain choices through reason and disposition. Far from being an exception to the natural order, the human will was of a piece with it. For Aquinas, the appetitive drives of human beings can explicitly be understood with reference to those of nonhuman beings farther down the *scala naturae*, a theory found in his *Summa theologiae* and elsewhere. With noncognitive creatures such as rocks and plants, we share natural motion toward an end. With animals, we share a sensory appetite that allows a reaction to our environment, of more and less voluntary degrees: both dogs and humans can modify our desires on the basis of what we sense happening around us. While the will is found in the human alone among earthly creatures, its operation mimics the other drives:

But an act of the will [*actus voluntatis*] is an inclination proceeding from the internal to the external and is like natural inclinations [*inclinationibus naturalibus*]. Therefore, as inclinations natural for natural things are from the cause of their nature, an act of the will is from God alone, who is the only cause of the rational nature having a will.... Both a natural inclination and a voluntary inclination are from God [*tam inclinatio naturalis quam voluntaria a Deo est*], each coming about according to the condition of the thing to which the inclination belongs. For God moves things insofar as this is proper to their nature.⁶⁵

Just as causes motivate natural motions, so too Aquinas searches for the causes behind the movements of the human will. Aquinas repeatedly states

that humans do not choose of necessity; he believed that the human will was free, but that its end—the good of happiness—was determined: man could choose the ways and means but not the end, which was divinely implanted.⁶⁶ Aquinas's causal model can be considered compatibilist, since it is an account in which “freedom can coexist with cognitive and volitional systems that function in entirely deterministic ways, necessitated by the sum of prior events.”⁶⁷ The human will's selection process is not mechanical (as is that of the sensory appetite); there is, in effect, a “physics of the will” insofar as the will is moved by something outside of itself—first by God and then mediately by what it experiences of its surroundings. The relevant point here is that the Thomist account understands human freedom in naturalistic terms, and that this naturalism made conservative theologians uncomfortable. In 1270, Bishop Tempier condemned the view that the will is a passive power and that it is necessarily moved by an object it apprehends, a prohibition that would be expanded in the subsequent 1277 condemnation.⁶⁸

Like Tempier, Lady Nature would deny that there is such a thing as a physics of the will, since, according to the voluntarist position, for election to be wholly free, the will must be self-moving. For Jean's Nature, the will is, in this way, wholly exceptional, differing categorically from the motion of other created things. Natural dispositions exist, but they can always be overcome by a will characterized by its autonomous ability to know itself:

Car frans voloires est se poissanz,
s'il est de soi bien connoissanz,
qu'il se peut tourjorz garantir,
s'il peut dedenz son queur santir
que pechiez vuelle eastre ses mestres,
comment qu'il aut des cors celestres.

(For free will is so powerful, if one knows oneself well, that it can always be maintained if one can feel within one's heart that sin wants to be its master, no matter how the heavenly bodies may go.)⁶⁹

Nature's description stresses the will's use of the inward senses rather than the outward ones, self-knowledge over sensory perception. Jean's Nature embraces the quasi-occasionalist belief that created substances such as planets cannot, in and of themselves, act as efficient causes. Instead, an independent act of divine will is behind each movement in the natural world, and God's willing is the sole source of physical and moral necessity in the world. In embracing this philosophical view, Nature would appear to follow scholastics such as Henry of Ghent and William of Auvergne who argued, contra Albertus, that there is no necessity in nature and that the human will is fully contingent with respect to natural laws.⁷⁰ In her hostility

to any model of external causation, Nature's rant against natural necessity positions her as a critic of Thomist compatibilist views; instead she offers the more conservative view that the human will is not subject to causal necessity in either physical or moral matters. The division in Jean's poem is not between those who channel their sexual inclination correctly and those who do not, but between those who understand how natural necessity relates to the rectitude of the human will and those who do not.

These differences of opinion about how the soul negotiates natural inclinations—what purchase *dispositio* truly has—were not merely academic, the dry stuff of disputation among university masters; models of inclination were central to the practices that shaped everyday medieval life, including theories of medicine, astrology, cosmology, and physiognomy. There was the often decried (but apparently frequent) practice of making predictions about the whole of a subsequent life based on a natal horoscope, precisely the kind of astrodeterminism that both Jean's Nature and Aquinas deny. There was the judicial astronomy that sought to predict what times of the year are most propitious for certain activities and which are not, a belief in the "dismal days" to which Chaucer alludes in his *Book of the Duchess*. But related to these suspect versions of inclination were other, more widely accepted kinds: medical treatment, for instance, was often determined on the basis of one's nativity; where the stars aligned at a person's birth provided crucial information about an individual's complexion and hence treatment. This fine line between acceptable and unacceptable uses of disposition was a frequent topic in popular scientific handbooks. The *Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy*, for instance, dutifully acknowledges that man's free will should trump any influence of the stars; however, it then goes on to rehearse at length the arguments of the old philosophers who believed that: "euery man leuyng is ymade of three þingis in generall, þat is to seie, of þe seven planetis, of þe twelve signys, & of þe four elements, by the wiche he hath his fortune, his bownechef & his myscheff, his manerys and his compleccionys."⁷¹ In this passage, the "complexions" summarily dismissed by Jean's Nature are envisaged as having a more dispositive influence. Similarly, physiognomic texts argue, sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly, that the body's physical appearance has the potential to shape the movements of the soul it houses, and yet these treatises are often prefaced with an anecdote designed to show that dispositions to sin can be overcome through virtuous vigilance.⁷² Thus Lady Nature's enthusiastic disavowal of necessary inclination in almost all of its forms would entail greater effects than she herself acknowledges, since inclination was bound up in subtle ways with everything from health to personality to one's earthly success or failure. Even the most conservative critics of *inclinatio* allow for some inherent influence; while Tempier condemns the idea that the soul's activities might be determined by cosmic influences, he goes on to make an exception in the case of natural necessity and disposition: "Error, nisi intelligatur de

eventibus naturalibus, et per viam dispositionis” (this is erroneous, unless it is understood as concerning natural events or by way of disposition).⁷³ Tempier’s view leaves unresolved the question of how dispositive *dispositio* really is. How can a person be somewhat but not wholly disposed? Once you start pulling at the thread of disposition, as both Tempier and Lady Nature do, the whole fabric of medieval everyday life has the potential to unravel. It was this fine distinction that the compatibilist position, denied by Jean’s Nature and by Tempier, sought to articulate by allowing for mediated modes of acceptable inclination.

Both voluntarists and compatibilists agreed that human beings are free; however, they disagreed as to the source of this freedom: Was it the intellect or the will? We can picture the difference between these positions by imagining a seesaw balanced between the two faculties. For voluntarists, the side of will is always lower; for compatibilists, it is the rational faculty that takes the heavier load. Nature invokes the power of reason several times in her monologue, asserting that it is divinely occasioned, but in each instance, it is clear that the rational faculty is subservient to the will. The intellect helps the will to combat the potentially malign influences of the planets, aiding the vigilant soul in resisting the slings and arrows of outrageous inclination.⁷⁴ In addition to reason, Nature’s quiver also includes other human activities such as teaching, a good diet, and association with virtuous people, all forms of “nourriture” that can collectively combat any external physical forces.⁷⁵

If Lady Nature sees reason as the will’s handmaiden, a tool of *electio*, compatibilists, by contrast, sees the reasoning intellect as the basis for the will’s operation, an operation necessarily entangled with a physical world that predisposes it toward certain actions and from which it receives sensory data. For Aquinas, our intentions and behaviors are directed toward the good, and this good is determined by being an object of reason.⁷⁶ As a subject of cognitive apprehension, reason perceives ends and gives the will the options from among which it ultimately chooses its path of action. In the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas argues that the will can be indirectly moved by that which it apprehends. Through the sensitive appetite, the passions could color the judgments of reason and, hence, affect the will that always follows it. In this model, cognition and volition are closely linked, and, importantly, the intellect is prior to the will and the latter only moves once the former has been moved. Following Aristotle, Aquinas’s causal model has a diminished role for the will, an intellectualist understanding of the will that was, as we have seen, censured by Tempier in 1277.⁷⁷ Like Tempier, Nature sees reason as a tool of the will rather than its partner, and she makes clear that reason does not take precedent over volition.

Lady Nature’s monologue now takes another characteristically voluntarist rhetorical turn: just as the human will is superior to the rational faculty, so too God’s will supersedes his intellect. In this way, debates about

what could and could not influence the human will feed directly into debates about how the divine will operates. The right of humans to make a truly free choice reflects the utter contingency of God's own will. Comparing the workings of the human will to its divine prototype was more than just an analogy, because, in the words of the historian of philosophy Thomas Pink, "God not only served as the pattern for freedom, exemplifying freedom in perfect form. He was also its source in us as our creator."⁷⁸ Like other voluntarists, Jean's Nature prioritizes the divine will, establishing it as the sole source of all that is exceptional about the human. This is evident in her Neoplatonic understanding of the *scala naturae*, a recitation that emphasizes the uniqueness of the human rather than the common appetites that it shares with the rest of nature (the Thomist version discussed above). In the *Rose*, Nature gives mankind the ability to "estre, vivre et santir" (exist, live, and feel), while it is their creator who imbues human beings with "l'antandemant" (understanding).⁷⁹ It is God who "keeps and sustains them eternally by his will alone [*son vouloir tant seulemant*], and if this will [*cil vouloirs*] did not maintain them they would all have to die."⁸⁰ This view recalls Nature's earlier claim that it is to man's will alone ("tant seulement") that all moral choice falls. The next few lines relentlessly insist on the centrality of divine volition, couching it not just in Neoplatonic terms but in Plato's actual voice. Nature ventriloquizes the Greek philosopher, who in turn speaks in the voice of God, asserting the inferiority of Nature herself in comparison to the divine will (*volanté*) that renders corruptible things eternal, the same will (*volanté*) that gives humans their generation. According to Plato ventriloquizing God, it is his will (*mon vueill*) that ensures that humans do not die, his will (*mes vouloirs*) that dictates the composition of earthly life and eternal afterlife. Placing the exceptional nature of the human explicitly in the context of God's will rather than his intellect is a conspicuously voluntarist theological move, one reinforced by the usual voluntarist preference for Plato over Aristotle.⁸¹ This passage seeks to clarify that the exceptional quality of the human will lies in its analogous relation to God's own *voluntas*. Like it, the human will is an "unmoved mover, a first cause that needs no prior determination."⁸² Lady Nature's insistence on the priority of human and divine wills aligns her with the conservative theological project of Bonaventure and Tempier. Like those theologians, Nature's view opposes the compatibilist views of Aquinas who describes the will as a "moved mover" and sees nothing wrong in attributing to it both active and passive qualities.⁸³ When Aquinas goes on to describe God's will, he does so by comparing it to the workings of nature, which, according to the *Physics*, cannot be hindered.⁸⁴ Jean's Nature, on the other hand, sees little common ground between her activities and the divine will.

According to Jean's Lady Nature, it is God's will, uncaused and uncausing, that potentially saves the medieval Christian, and it is to the providential operations of this will that the last movement of her speech

turns. For Nature and the voluntarists, the human will is not ordered according to ends; acorns and souls have nothing in common. On similar grounds, Jean's Nature and conservative ecclesiastics reject a teleological model of predestination: contra Aquinas, God does not determine final outcomes by prescribing the good as the necessary end of human actions. It is this doctrine of nonnecessitated providence that Jean's Nature voices in her paeon to the eternal temporal present of God's omniscience:

C'est sa presante vision,
car qui la diffinicion
de pardurableté dellie,
ce est possession de vie
qui par fin ne peut estre prise,
tretoute ansamble, san devise.

(This [predestination] is his present vision, for if one unbinds the definition of eternity, it is the possession of life which cannot be grasped by an end, a life that is completely whole, without any division.)⁸⁵

God's providence cannot be parsed in the same way that natural phenomena can be divided up and inquired into by the human mind. The problem for Nature is that Thomist scholastics insist on applying rational methods to it and, in doing so, they presume a type of necessity at work behind grace, an assumption that human life and the providence in which it is bound both work toward a predetermined end.⁸⁶ Centuries earlier, Boethius had written in his *Consolatio philosophiae* that God had bound "the actions and fortunes of men in an unbreakable chain of causes," and later Aristotelians such as Aquinas had elaborated this "chain of causes" according to the model set out in the *Physics*.⁸⁷ The attempted synthesis of Greek science with Christian revelation leads Aquinas to argue that, in the words of the historian of philosophy Hester Goodenough Gelber, "God is not only the first efficient and the first formal cause of everything as enacted through his will, but also, through his reason, the ultimate final cause."⁸⁸ God directs human agents to do good through his grace, but it was his intellect that, for Aquinas, was imagined to be the source of the ends. In contrast to his later critics, Aquinas believed that this model did not impose coercive necessity as the will could still choose to do other than pursue the divinely ordained end. What is important here is that both sides of this debate over divine volition framed it in terms of Aristotelian teleology, and it is this language of providential ends that Nature rejects; for her, as for the voluntarists, eschatological reality is that "qui par fin ne peut estre prise."

Nature's ardent embrace of the voluntarist stance raises the question: To what end does Jean de Meun depict Nature as a committed voluntarist, one intent on dismantling the threat not just of astrodeterminism and radical

Aristotelianism but also of the more mainstream, compatibilist approach to the will associated with Aquinas? To argue for a voluntarist reading of Jean's representation of Lady Nature is not to endorse an uncomplicated promotion of this conservative orthodoxy on the part of either poet or poem. What is so startling about this vision of Nature is that it gave Jean's contemporaries a glimpse of the world fashioned after the most conservative of theological beliefs, one where the influence of Aristotelian causality and necessity were radically curtailed. In promoting God's absolute power so enthusiastically, Jean's Nature was very much of a piece with Tempier's condemnations, since they had, in the words of the historian William J. Courtenay, "marked a victory for the concept of divine omnipotence, since man of the condemned articles restricted the freedom of God and affirmed the necessity of the world and the laws of nature."⁸⁹

If Tempier sought to release man from the laws of nature, Jean's Nature sought to do the same. The spokesperson for this freedom in the *Roman de la Rose*, however, is a misogynistic stereotype, one whose disordered discourse overruns the bounds of magisterial propriety even as it engages in quodlibetal debates on the will. Nature potentially emerges as a cautionary lesson about assuming that radical human exceptionalism is a viable theological system. A fully contingent God, just like a fully contingent human will, renders all earthly knowledge redundant at best, suspect at worst. If the poem were to endorse fully Nature's voluntarist vision, one that emphasized the analogy between the contingency of the human will and the contingency of God's omnipotence, then how are we to understand the poem's ending, where the lover indulges his physical passion for the rose, a requital facilitated by both the duenna La Vieille as well as Nature's confessor Genius? The ending suggests that Nature can be fully separated neither from these spokespersons for necessity nor from the workings of necessity itself, the inherent inclination that Nature had repudiated with such vigor. If Nature's arguments about the will seek to exclude the Thomist compatibilist position, this "law of the excluded middle" is similarly enacted in the poem's structure: we are not given a model for the human that is somewhat inclined, somewhat free; instead, we see both extremes enacted in the poem's cast of allegorical characters.

The Law of Necessity: La Vieille and Genius

For Aquinas and the compatibilists, the beauty of man lies in the fact that God has inclined him to the good, an inclination that unites him with the rest of the created world; for Lady Nature and the voluntarists, man's distinctive trait is that he has the complete freedom to choose to do good, a freedom that marks his uniqueness with respect to the other earthly orders. Usually a figure for inclination, the Lady Nature personified by Jean de

Meun instead becomes a figure for the contingency of choice. Instead of a volitional predisposition to action, humankind is given the far more estimable gift of the ability to pick a path without preexisting conditions. This is a morally alluring vision, and we might be inclined to view Nature's advocacy of extreme free will as exemplary and philosophically indisputable, especially given that it seems to offer an orthodox alternative to the determinist views of both La Vieille, the morally suspect duenna who had earlier counseled the dreamer to pursue a physical union with his beloved, and Genius, a curious *ambidexter* who serves God and the God of Love simultaneously.

When Nature decries the ignorant laypeople who see their lives as determined by powers beyond themselves, she could well be talking about La Vieille. A firm believer in Nature's necessity, La Vieille vows that natural inclination cannot be restrained, since her power surpasses even habit and training ("el passe neïs nourreture").⁹⁰ It is this "nourreture" that, as we have seen, Nature herself champions. Nature implies that natural inclination entails no ontological necessity; though the heavens incline people to behave in certain ways, she insists that it is possible for humans to overcome their natural impulses ("leur meurs naturex") through religious instruction ("par doctrine") and good nurture ("par nourreture nete et fine").⁹¹

At the heart of this "nature versus nurture" debate is the question of human exceptionalism. La Vieille claims that humans are in no way exceptional to the rest of the animal kingdom. Just as a black horse will mate with a mare of any color, just as a kitten will chase and eat a rat, so too women desire men due to an irresistible "naturel appetit" (l. 14059). Though men and women are tempted to use free will (*franche volanté*) to resist these impulses, Nature, according to La Vieille, "ausinc les demeine / con les bestes que ci deïsmes" (controls them to that end just as she does the animals that we were just speaking of).⁹² The duenna argues that humans are driven by reproductive ends, and, while they are free to exercise choice, such choice is usually overruled by natural drives; humans, in short, are subject to the teleology at work in the rest of the material world. Clearly, La Vieille is a negative exemplum to the extent that she is simultaneously a misogynistic stereotype (who argues that all women are by nature sexually voracious) and a would-be pander (who encourages the dreamer's carnal pursuit). The model of determinism La Vieille voices is to be shunned; even compatibilist writers who argued about the possibility of mediated external influences on the will admitted that it was free in the last instance to combat just such ethical dilemmas.

And yet Nature's extreme voluntarism does not provide us with a comfortable alternative to La Vieille's determinist views. Even before the implications of Nature's philosophical argument become apparent, we are given clues that her views might not be fully or easily affirmed by the university-trained readers who seem to be Jean's primary audience for this

episode. One clue that the male clerical reader could not effortlessly occupy Nature's beliefs against those of La Vieille is that this disagreement over inclination and will pits two different types of misogynistic stereotypes against one another. As we have seen, it is not just La Vieille who acts as a channel for antifeminist discourse; Nature herself confirms that a woman cannot be silent, that her speech is potentially unruly and disordered.⁹³

Nature's voluntarism is further qualified by the fact that Jean's poem reserves a particular space to interrogate the idea of physical and moral necessity beyond that articulated earlier in the poem by La Vieille: in the character of Nature's confessor Genius we see the operations of a place-based, physical necessity. La Vieille's naturalism is that of the unlettered; her examples are taken from everyday life: the caged bird, the netted fish, an assortment of randy barnyard animals. Genius's naturalism is learned, couched in the recognizable language of Aristotelian natural philosophy. As Sylvia Huot rightfully observes, Genius is meant to be understood as a clerical figure, though it is important to note that he is an academic figure of a highly specific kind.⁹⁴ Nature introduces Genius as

qui des leus iestes dex
et mestres, et selonc leur proprietez
tretouz en euvre les metez,
et bien achevez la besoigne
di conme a chascun leu besoigne

(you who are the god and master of places, who sets all things
at work according to their properties and who achieves well
the necessary task just as is appropriate to each needful
place).⁹⁵

This "patialized" role associates him with necessity ("la besoigne"; "chascun leu besoigne") and the forces that structure the Aristotelian universe, the natural motion that leads all things, animate and inanimate, to their true homes. It also associates him with an encyclopedic tradition embodied in one of the most popular of medieval encyclopedias, *De proprietatibus rerum*, a work whose author, Bartholomeus Anglicus, was himself known as the "master of properties."⁹⁶ Far from the abstract Newtonian idea of inert space, medieval place was not only "something," but something that "exerts a certain influence." According to Aristotle's *Physics*, the ancients found it to be "a marvelous thing ... without which nothing else can exist."⁹⁷ In the late medieval period, the lure of a specific place—positionality—was much greater than the fantasy of extended space unfolding in an infinite way, an idea that emerged only during the Scientific Revolution.⁹⁸ The draw exerted by natural place explains why fire will always travel upward toward the outermost part of the plenum, even if all of the other elements below it were removed. As we saw earlier, Aquinas argues that such place-based natural

inclinations influence humans in a mediated way. Each created being, whether a rock or a soul, is endowed with an appetitive power based on its end; when a thing is away from its proper place, it seeks to return itself thence, thus place is the immediate cause of all local motion. Within Aristotelian physics, the natural agent that produces a body also confers on it all of its essential properties. Jean's Genius is just such a "marvelous thing," the charismatic natural agent responsible for setting in motion causal chains of events, a causal chain that in the *Roman de la Rose* leads the lover to the consummation of his desire.

The central question raised by the figure of Genius for many critics has been whether or not his views are to be condemned. Is the author encouraging sexuality divorced from Christian norms or condemning it? George Economou summarizes the main positions succinctly, demonstrating that the poem has almost evenly divided critics over whether or not Jean's intention is to affirm a position of liberal behavior or whether carnal love is satirized and ultimately repudiated.⁹⁹ In order to make a case against Genius's views, some critics have argued that he is meant to be a recognizably Aristotelian figure. Speaking of Genius's views on sex and love, Pierres-Yves Badel claims that Genius "pushes the nuanced viewpoints of Aristotelian commentators to their radical and scandalous extremes."¹⁰⁰ And yet, as we have seen, neither Tempier nor the radical Aristotelians had much to say about sex itself. We can consider Genius radical instead with respect to his views on inclination, sexual desire being only one case of this type of natural motion. Sarah Kay has read Genius as that difficult point where the physical meets the metaphysical. Admitting the difficulty of Genius's address to Love's army, she concedes that it is "intellectually preposterous, ... [an] outrageous miscegenation of sex and theology in the promise that the individual can achieve union with the Godhead through reproduction."¹⁰¹ However, his vision cannot be dispensed with easily, since he rules over the Park of the Lamb, an idealized paradise that is "a reward for physical activity (reproductive sex) but is itself defined by its denial of natural laws."¹⁰² Kay's reading raises the question: why would Genius, Nature's confessor, rule over a place where Nature's order is suspended? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to read Genius and Nature as counterpoints to one another: they embody opposite responses to what governs human behavior—necessity as opposed to contingency. It is their uncomfortable alliance that allows Jean to dramatize how the academic debate over the will relates to popular portrayals of sexual desire.

The fact that Genius advocates for the supremacy of natural inclination—the same "naturele entencion" attributed by La Vieille to all women earlier in the poem—makes it unlikely that he is to be read as a positive figure. However, it is equally unlikely that inclination is only a synonym for concupiscence (as John Fleming has argued), otherwise the poem would pose no substantive ethical dilemma whatsoever.¹⁰³ All medieval writers

condemn lechery. The problem, as posed by Jean, is more complex. If sexual inclination is only one aspect of the necessary inclinations that were thought to govern physical and metaphysical motion and change, by what rules are we to determine which inclinations are licit and which illicit? Why is the human exceptional in that it must fight its inclination in the case of sex but unexceptional in that it adheres to inclination in most other cases? These are the ethical problems that Jean's poem places before its reader by explicitly opposing the vision of Nature to that of La Vieille and Genius.

These ethical problems are most clearly embodied in the charter that Genius offers in Nature's name, a charter ostensibly intended to correct mankind's sinful departure from her laws. Nature herself does not explicitly argue in favor of sexual license; instead, her charter, read and interpreted by Genius, excommunicates those who repudiate the acts "par cui nature est soutenue" (by which Nature is supported).¹⁰⁴ It is left unclear which acts these may be, and it is only Genius's interpretation of this decree that introduces the lasciviously allegorical language of sexual pleasure and consummation that is notably absent from Nature's own speech. In the prototype of Genius's charter found in Alan of Lille, the document explicitly condemns only the person who "exceptionem facit anomalam Veneris" (pursues irregular exceptions to the rule of Venus); in Jean, Genius's charter is much broader in scope, faulting any who fail to procreate at all, a condemnation of the celibate and the chaste along with the sodomite.¹⁰⁵ The charter that Jean's Genius announces is vague enough to be interpreted as a call to heed natural inclination, that dangerous principle that Nature has already decisively rejected. Moreover, Genius's charter redefines Nature in determinist terms; according to him, the goddess administers all things

par l'influence des esteles,
car tout est ordené par eles
selonc les droiz anperiaus
don Nature est officiaus

(through the influence of the stars, because everything is
ordained by them according to the celestial justice that Nature
executes).¹⁰⁶

He praises her not as the source of "natural freedom" in humankind—her own self-description—but as the avenue through which the ceaseless revolutions of cosmic forces exert their influence here below. Genius reminds us that Nature does nothing in vain, she "qui ... n'onques ne fist riens por noiant."¹⁰⁷ In ascribing to her that most recognizable of Aristotelian epithets, Genius rechristens her a principle of necessity. In speaking for Nature, in ventriloquizing her, Genius converts her into a representative of the sort of unnuanced astrodeterminism that Nature has spent thousands of lines arguing against. His interpretation of Nature's anathema seems a

deliberate redirection of her earlier pronouncements.

In this way, Genius can be seen as the immanent, Aristotelian fox in Nature's transcendent, Platonic henhouse. "Necessity has no law" means, for Genius and his determinist collaborator La Vieille, that sexual desire cannot be bridled. It also implies that humans are subject to physical necessity in fundamentally intransigent ways, a necessity that Nature vehemently rejects as antithetical to human free choice. What is innovative in Jean's poem is the way that the poet frames the issue of necessity, not as singularity, but as a set of concentric questions: What is the relation between human, astronomical, and divine models of necessity? Does one type of necessity imply another? If you deny one type of necessity, can you legitimately keep any of the others?

Compatibilists like Aquinas would argue that one could acknowledge some orders of necessity while denying others; voluntarists such as Bonaventure, Tempier, and Lady Nature had to deny all necessity with respect to the human in order to remain philosophically consistent. This latter position had the unintended, and somewhat troubling, consequence of equating thoroughly different types of influences: astrodeterminism and God's potential to sway the will, for instance, were to be rejected for similar reasons. In rejecting both phenomena, voluntarists ended up suggesting what the two potentially had in common. By showing his readers what a voluntarist world would look like in (poetic) practice, Jean de Meun suggests that it is the desire to isolate the human will indelibly from the world that can lead to potential moral chaos, to the lover consummating his erotic desire for the rose. To make Nature fully contingent, to sever the links between volition and cognition, to demote reason to mere counselor status, is what guarantees the triumph of the determinist position at the end of the *Roman de la Rose*. In dividing off free will from natural inclination, the poem asks whether or not this rigid separation—the separation at the heart of the Augustinian vision as promoted in Bonaventure's theology, legitimated by Tempier's condemnations, and argued for by Jean's Lady Nature—is viable. The result within the poem is that the dreamer is allowed to requite his desire for the rose by sidestepping appeals to his free will by characters such as Reason and Lady Nature. To display the voluntarist model of the human on this orthodox armature is to demonstrate the problems that beset it.

By presenting Nature, an exceptional exceptionalist, alongside Genius and La Vieille, two very determined determinists, the poem leaves no viable middle ground between these positions. Yet Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas had offered just such a middle ground, one that allows the human to be naturally inclined but ultimately morally free, a vision that had proven itself deeply attractive to a group of thirteenth-century philosophers and theologians. By omitting the compatibilist position at the heart of debates between Aquinas and Bonaventure, between Tempier and the arts faculty at the University of Paris, between Nature and Genius within his poem, Jean de

Meun succeeds in parodying not his literary source, Alan of Lille, but the contemporary university debate over Aristotle's nature, an argument that had grown increasingly shrill by the last quarter of the thirteenth century. The ethical questions posed by the *Rose* are built around this aporia, one that would have been evident to his contemporaries but that has been obscured both by historical distance and by the rhetorical intricacies of a lightly vernacularized scholastic debate.¹⁰⁸

If neither the viewpoint of Nature nor those of La Vieille and Genius can offer a reliable guide to the human condition, taken together, they offer a profound ethical lesson about the need to consider the moral hazards that ensue from their forced separation. In dramatizing a world in which the human will and nature are both utterly contingent, subject to no regular workings, Jean's personification fully occupied the voluntarist fantasy in such a way as to make its reality far less appealing than the ideal. Jean's poem offers two extreme options for imagining how the human relates to the natural world: for Nature, there is no necessary relation between the two, since the human has very little in common with the rest of the created world. The model offered by La Vieille and Genius, on the other hand, implies that the human is coextensive with nature in such a way as to be morally repugnant. Neither human exceptionalism nor human unexceptionalism appears to be a viable alternative in Jean's world. The poem shows the detrimental effects of opposing reason to natural inclination: such a move encourages a world where the will's autonomy is more danger than benefit. In an environment where natural reason has little purchase and Nature herself is shown to be incapable of ordering either her words or the sublunary world, the reader is left wondering: is the problem in the system or in the human will, as Nature repetitively asserts? It is less a failure of individual will than a collective failure to imagine nature correctly.

By omitting the compatibilist solution that was being denounced by Bonaventure and that would be effectively proscribed by Tempier, Jean suggests the deep philosophical paradox that lies at the heart of voluntarist solutions to the problem of the human, the solution that was in the process of becoming the orthodoxy as Jean was writing his continuation of Guillaume de Lorris's poem. Both the orthodox censures and Jean's poem codify the state of the disputed philosophical question of inclination. If the *Roman de la Rose* can be illuminated with reference to the condemnations, the condemnations can also be illuminated with reference to Jean's poem. The specific danger that emerged in the 1260s and 1270s was that the study of physical nature could provide the basis for an alternate ethical system far from the categorical sureties pronounced by the Fourth Lateran Council earlier in the century. In making nature completely contingent, as Tempier and Bonaventure sought to do, nature could not act as the basis for anything, because, at base, it was really the unknowability of God's will that underwrote the physical world, a position endorsed by Jean's Nature.

In caricaturing this debate through his personifications, Jean provides a bird's-eye view that gave his clerical audience some ideological distance on this dispute, a distance that would allow them to see that, as clerics, their positions had more in common than they might imagine. If the passage's overt antifeminism is one way of consolidating its clerical readership, so too it activates another binary to similar effect: the opposition between clerics and various categories of the laity. Nature proves herself to be an equal opportunity chauvinist: she complains both of the unlearned commoners and of the learned nobility. The drama of the illiterate fatalist who does not fully understand divine foreknowledge allows Nature to voice her voluntarism even as it serves to direct the readers' attention back to ecclesiastical authority more generally: "Qui nou set a clerc le demande, / qui leü l'ait et qui l'antande" (he who does not know it may ask a clerk who had studied it and who may understand it).¹⁰⁹ The aristocratic *literatus* fares little better than his common counterpart. While these noblemen have access to learning, they rarely avail themselves of it, according to Nature.¹¹⁰ In another example of the episode's multifaceted dramatic irony, Nature champions nurture over biology: true nobility, she argues, comes not through the accident of birth but through the acquired habit of reading. One's inherent disposition to morality or immorality is redundant, since clerks alone are in a position to correct their behavior through the exempla that they read in histories, to develop the clerical *habitus* whose representation was to become a feature in late medieval literary texts, according to Katharine Breen.¹¹¹ For the *Rose's* Nature, clerical mastery of texts triumphs over noble lineage. Like the moment where Nature voices the misogynistic script of women being unable to keep secrets, here she disavows her own determining powers in favor of those of nurture.

This targeting of women and the laity is, ultimately, a kind of audience "drag." If, as Walter Ong reminds us, every writer's audience is a fiction, Nature's intended audience is a double fiction: her academic monologue, aimed neither at women nor at the laity, is instead intended for that learned clerical caste whose academic arguments over nature's powers had divided the arts from divinity, philosophers from theologians. Those facets of the Nature episode that are so perplexing and occasionally tedious to modern readers and critics alike—its seemingly gratuitous antifeminism, its swipes at the credulousness of the laity, and its digressions on the status of clerks—are thus central to the episode's wider purpose. The most "in" of the many in-jokes that populate the poem (and certainly its most extended), Nature's monologue attempts to consolidate the identity of a cadre of university-trained clerics, a unity that, outside of Jean's poem, had been severely tested in Jean's immediate intellectual sphere by recent debate over the validity of natural philosophical tenets of looking at the material world.

In Jean's continuation, personified Nature neatly enacts both a theological and an aesthetic *quid pro quo*. If the debate over Aristotelian

natural philosophy had resulted in the fracturing of this identity in the Parisian intellectual environment of the 1270s over precisely this question of how determined the human will is, what more fitting personification than Nature to recuperate this class solidarity? This is a plea for a unified clerical identity, one forged despite the debate over the will and Aristotelian natural philosophy, an identity that could be consolidated around the clerical exclusion of the laity, the nobility, and women, one forged by ultimately excluding Nature herself.

It is this messy, dialectical exploration of the human will in the character of allegorical Nature that Jean bequeaths to his vernacular poetic inheritors. Nature's characterization offers a window not just onto contemporary scholastic debate over how best to represent the natural order but also onto the aesthetic tensions that marked allegory itself as a representational practice. The last part of the chapter turns to the literary stakes of Jean's portrayal of Nature, analyzing what happens to mimesis when allegory is unmoored from both symptomatic and encyclopedic ways of reading the natural world.

Indescribable Nature and the Ethics of Allegory

In thematizing the conflict between La Vieille and Genius on the one hand and Nature on the other, between the principles of natural necessity and contingent agency respectively, Jean's poem is the point of origin for a vernacular literary tradition that frames the problem of human love and sexuality in terms of the physics that governs the rest of the natural world. The central question of the *Rose* is less whether or not sexual desire is, in itself, a good thing or a bad thing, and more pointedly whether the mechanism that governs desire is the same in the natural world as in the human. In redefining nature as a series of contingent happenings rather than a set of necessary laws, Jean also troubles the received definitions of "nature" and "art," a relation that is foregrounded in the description of Nature's powers. According to Aristotle, nature is that which contains within itself a drive toward its own final form; art is that which, lacking its own inherent ends, is given its final form by another.¹¹² In arguing against inclination so intensely, Jean's Nature seeks to disable the workings of a potentially dangerous inclination in humans; in doing so, she also renders untenable the very definition of art that medieval didactic poetry had frequently taken for granted. Denying natural inclination has aesthetic and not just philosophical consequences in the poem, for readers may well wonder: what is left to distinguish Nature herself from a human artifice that models itself on her powers?

This representational problem is evident even before Nature begins to speak: when the *Rose's* narrator first encounters the goddess, her appearance

prompts a lecture on her ineffability, an indescribability that results from the fact that art is always and only a poor copy of a natural original. As we progress through the episode, we will see how Nature's meditation on her own indescribability foreshadows the unknowability of the divine will, alerting us to the ways in which aesthetics and theology share a common representational challenge. In Jean's continuation of the *Rose*, the ethical problem faced by the lover of whether to choose an earthly or a spiritual love is related to the narrative problem of whether the poet's allegorical message is anchored in earthly similitudes or spiritual truths. This difficulty is embodied in the (dis)embodied figure of Nature herself. Gone is the exemplary figuration of Nature's richly allegorical person found in Alan of Lille's *De planctu naturae*. In place of the hundreds of lines that Alan spends describing Nature's allegorized demeanor—from her precise hair parting to her gorgeously figured (if torn) robes—we find a long *praeteritio*. Claiming that he is not up to the task of describing Nature, Jean's narrator demurs, observing that, were he even better able to do so, the task is at any rate impossible:

Bien la vos vousisse descrire,
mes mi sans n'i porroit soffire.
Mi sans! Qu'ai je dit? C'est du mains!
Non feroit voir nus sans humains
ne par voiz vive ne par notes,
et fust Platons ou Aristotes,
Algis, Euclidés, Tholomees,
qui tant ont or granz renomees
d'avoir esté bon escrivain:
leur angin seroient si vain,
s'il osaient la chose anprendre,
qu'il ne la porroient entendre;
ne Pigmalion entaillier;
an vain s'i porroit travaillier
Parasyus; voir Apellés,
que je mout bon paintre apel, les
biautez de lui ja mes descrire
ne pourroit, tant eüst a vivre;
.....
Nus for Diex ne le porroit fere.
Et por ce que, se je pöisse,
volantiers au mains l'antandisse.

(I would willingly describe her [Nature] to you, but my sense is not equal to it. My sense! What have I said? That's the least one could say. No human sense would show her, either vocally or in writing. Even if it were Plato or Aristotle, Algis,

Euclid, or Ptolemy, who now have such great reputations for having been good writers, their wits would be so useless, if they dared undertake the task, that they could not do so. Nor could Pygmalion; Parrasius could work at the job in vain; indeed Apelles, whom I call a very good painter, could never describe her beauty, no matter how long he had to live.... No one except God could do so. Therefore I would willingly at least have tried if I had been able.)¹¹³

Instead of a description of Nature herself, the reader is given almost one hundred lines describing how impossible it is to describe Nature. Nature's essence can be conveyed truly by neither science nor art. Like the rest of the representational arts, natural philosophy fails to capture the working of the cosmos, a failure underscored by Jean's rhyming of "escrivain" with "si vain" (ll. 16143–44), a rhyme that implicates writing in general with such failure, presumably even the evident literary talents of the dream narrator-poet himself.¹¹⁴ Alan's extended blazon of Nature's moralized attributes gives way to Jean's overgrown *occupatio*. If Alan's physical description of Nature amounted to an encyclopedic list of animals, plants, and other occupants of the earthly region, a visual taxonomy of the sensible world inscribed on Nature's dress, Jean's nondescription replaces it with a snapshot of the narrator's mind. Where we expect to see external reality, however highly stylized, we instead glimpse an inner mental state, an image of the shortcomings of art in general and this poet-narrator in particular.

In declining to indulge in the ekphrastic orgy of physical detail that characterizes Alan's Nature—in replacing *blazon* with *occupatio*, anatomy with apophysis—this passage produces several literary effects simultaneously. It cheekily declines to compete with Alan's influential virtuoso performance, while simultaneously suggesting that such a performance is perhaps a mode of representational hubris. In lamenting that neither Plato nor Aristotle, neither Pygmalion nor Apelles, could successfully emulate her, the narrator equates the failure of natural philosophy to describe and quantify nature adequately to the failure of the representational arts to imitate her faithfully. The list of useless Greek philosophers is balanced by a list of equally useless artists, all victims of the ineffability of Nature. In aligning art and natural philosophy as complementary ways of knowing the natural world, Jean suggests that both are inevitably subject to the same types of failings.¹¹⁵ According to the narrator, natural philosophy and art both fail because they are based on a sensory observation that, in itself, is not sufficient to capture Nature's truths. The sensible world, together with the senses as an instrument of apprehension, takes a backseat to the immaterial mental world of the narrator. Jean's poem, both a compendium of natural knowledge and an allegorical dream vision, is perhaps doubly prone to these pitfalls, the

narrator open to the charge of being not just a concupiscent lover but an “escrivain ... si vain.” The narrator adds his own name to this illustrious list of representational failures, asserting that it is best not to attempt such a description since only God could both know Nature in her totality and depict her.

If Jean’s continuation of the *Rose* takes seeming pleasure in dramatizing the limits of its own representational practice, critics have unsurprisingly disagreed over how best to characterize Jean’s allegorical intentions and hence to understand Nature’s personification. Hans Robert Jauss argued that Jean de Meun self-consciously disdained the allegorical form of his predecessor Alan.¹¹⁶ A. J. Minnis seeks to modify this assessment, arguing that Jean does not so much dismiss the entire tradition of integumental allegoresis but rather multiplies the rhetorical strategies on offer over the course of his continuation, a multiplication that results in a satiric “stripping” of language itself, a tactic characteristic of the Ovidian love tradition. While different modes of allegory are employed in different moments of the poem, one can still see the older model of integumental allegory at work in the mythographic invocations of Genius’s sermon, a mode that, according to Minnis, Jean de Meun elsewhere largely avoids.¹¹⁷ Like Minnis, Kevin Brownlee believes that the *Rose* intentionally offers multiple kinds of allegory in a competitive mimetic economy. The poem is allegorically innovative insofar as Genius and Nature, like the rest of the allegorical persons in Jean’s continuation, offer individually coherent, though opposing, philosophical positions. The poem’s ending, however, makes no effort to validate any one over and against another. Integumental allegoresis is the primary mode the poem embraces, but the promised hermeneutic aids that would provide its key never materialize—the narrator does not provide the gloss he leads the reader to expect—thus leaving the poem open to a variety of potentially incompatible readings: “no single inscribed ‘argument’ is presented by the text, globally speaking, as authoritative in absolute terms.”¹¹⁸ Taking a different approach, Mary Franklin-Brown sees the narrator’s refusal to describe an allegorized Nature as less a failing of his poetic project in particular and more of language generally. The discussion of art and nature prefaced to Nature’s monologue “draw[s] our attention to language’s limitations by emphasizing the disjunction between verbal representation and nature itself.” Nature’s speech “call[s] attention to the artificiality and limitations of any verbal description of the world, to the gulf dividing words and things.”¹¹⁹

Following on from the reading of Franklin-Brown, it is important to note that this clear division between words and things is characteristic of an Augustinian view of nature and, while the poem associates it with both Nature and the narrator, it does not necessarily endorse it. Read in its theologico-rhetorical context, the narrator’s inability to describe Nature evokes the late antique “secrets of nature” topos described earlier, even as it

simultaneously resonates with the indescribability topos, the favored figure of late medieval writers wishing to emphasize human insufficiency in the face of the divine design. By the time that Jean was writing, it also served to articulate the exceptional position of the human with respect to the rest of the natural world. If, as we have seen, Nature's Neoplatonic philosophical commitments allow Jean to interrogate the extreme consequences of holding such beliefs at the end of the thirteenth century, so too the poem's (non)representation of Nature allows it to explore the benefits and challenges of an Augustinian mode of allegory. Jean had inherited two modes of natural allegory, modes that I describe at length in [Chapter 1](#). On the one hand, there was the cosmological view (as in Alan and Hugh of St. Victor) that embraced a transcendent version of allegory. Allegory was necessitated because of the essential inexpressibility of some higher truths as well as our absolute distance from our creator. Allegory results from human alterity. On the other, was a more immanent model of allegory, one that saw meaning in the visible world to be the seed that led to a blossoming of spiritual truth. Writers such as Aquinas believed that the spiritual truth of allegory was guaranteed because there was a fundamental continuum of meaning between material and immaterial worlds.¹²⁰ When considering the question of whether metaphor is permissible in sacred writing, Aquinas argues that, since cognition happens according to the capacity of the knower, man must understand intellectual truths through the material signs apparent to our senses. Therefore, this type of figural language in expounding sacred doctrine is both necessary and useful.¹²¹ Just as there is necessity guiding the human in the physical world, so too there is necessity in the figural world of meaning making.

These differing conceptions of how allegory operates were one of the aesthetic consequences of the thirteenth-century desire to integrate Aristotle's natural philosophy more fully with Christian doctrine. Underneath this shift lies another, even more fundamental difference in how one looks at nature, a difference that is apparent if we again compare Jean's allegorical practice with that of Alan of Lille. Whereas, in Alan, nature was viewed as an objective sensible world with exemplary moral lessons to teach—lessons inscribed on Nature's dress and in her person—in Jean, nature is instead viewed as inexpressible and its relation to the human as far from exemplary. For Jean, the relation between personified Nature and material nature (lilies, roses, snow) cannot be a direct one, because an extreme voluntarist position would have to argue that Nature is not ultimately reducible to the materiality of the physical world; her laws do not bind; and, hence, words and things are categorically different. This representational problem is not present in Alan. In Alan, the encounter with Nature is initially staged as the dreamer's literal and spiritual failure to recognize Nature, rather than a problem of understanding what nature is. Nature is a hybrid of internal forces and actual things. The material birds, plants, and

rocks on Nature's dress point us to something else and to themselves at the same time: "quamvis ibi quasi allegorice viverent, ibi tamen esse videbantur ad litteram" (though their existence here was a kind of allegory, they seemed nonetheless to be literally present).¹²² In Alan, the problem is that the poet neither recognizes her nor does he understand her role in the divine plan. The drama at the heart of being human in Alan concerns the extent to which man can fathom the divine imperative behind Nature and consequently conform himself to it. This is a problem of knowledge: How do we know Nature and her rules? What is indescribable in Alan is God's divine plan, not Nature's execution of it. An essentially epistemological problem in Alan is later transformed into an ontological one in Jean. Jean's narrator easily recognizes Nature, but he cannot fathom her being and hence represent her.¹²³ If Alan's narrator had described Nature at length, while remaining unaware of her true identity, Jean's narrator knows who she is, but cannot describe her. This shift in poetic emphasis echoes the academic shift in ways of knowing nature over the same period: what was an epistemological problem for the twelfth-century cosmologists (how do we know nature?) was to become instead a problem of representation and ontology in the thirteenth century (what is the essence of nature? how do her metaphysical properties coexist with her physical ones?).

In associating Nature and the narrator's view of her with the Augustinian mode of allegory over and against the Aristotelian one, Jean is showing the consonance between Nature's philosophical views and her allegorical description within the poem. Just as he does with Nature's philosophy, the poet is interrogating the limits of this mode of allegory rather than either neutrally employing it or, less, endorsing it. In presenting Nature as "indescribable," the narrator uses the Neoplatonic rhetorical trope to signal the aesthetic consequences of Nature's own voluntarist vision of nature, one whose limitations her allegorical characterization helps to expose.

If this vision of Nature (and nature) highlights the rupture between the things of this world and those beyond it, as Franklin-Brown has rightly argued, the poem's audience remains free to imagine the world in a more immanent, Aristotelian key, one that instead minimizes the gap between here and hereafter, one that sees the human as participating in the natural world rather than alienated from it. Jean's allegorical practice in the Nature episode is meant to raise questions about the philosophical stakes of representing nature in both poetry and in natural philosophy, realms that, I argue, Jean would have seen as coextensive. It was not that Jean found either Alan of Lille or the Augustinian mode of allegory simply lacking; rather, neither addressed the urgent questions that had arisen in the wake of the pervasive influence of Aristotelian natural philosophy in the university that had occurred since *De planctu naturae* was written.

Yet once Jean starts questioning the mimetic assumptions behind his

predecessor's mode of allegorizing Nature, once he begins to unravel the nature-art definition, he is left with the larger problem of what licenses the didactic poet who, in whatever attenuated fashion, attempts to claim Nature's moral authority as his own. What happens to the poet who can no longer hide behind the skirts of Nature's ripped tunic? For Alan of Lille, the representational powers of both Nature and Genius had served as proxy for those of the poet. Alan's Nature, with the aid of a "reed pen" (*arundinei stili*), draws a series of everchanging images on tablets, images that symbolize the cyclical, changeable nature of the sublunary world. Nature will later use this same stylus to pen the charter that excommunicates all those who do not submit to her rule, banishing them from communion in her "church."¹²⁴ Alan's Genius, another inscriptive alter ego charged with enforcing this charter, holds a pen in one hand and, in the other, a parchment on which he portrays images of natural things, much as Nature does.¹²⁵ This graphic conjuring of the physical world serves as a type for the artist's representation of the environment around him, a copying that ultimately points the allegory's reader toward the divine forms, the supramundane originals of which these visible phenomena are merely echoes. In *De planctu naturae*, Nature and Genius draw creatures into being with their pens; just so, the poet's pen copies down these earthly figures and turns them into exemplary lessons. The trope of writing was a congenial symbol for this strain of integumental allegory, a mode of mimesis—human art copying a natural original—that underwrites the relation between the poet and his subject matter as well as between poet and audience.

In Jean's continuation of the *Rose*, by contrast, this mimetic process is disrupted and, as a consequence, the ethical necessity of poetry as natural reproduction is no longer self-evident. Jean disables the mimetic regress that characterized the cosmographical vision wherein Nature necessarily follows God's plan, poets necessarily copy down these exemplary actions, and humans—if they are good readers—necessarily follow the poets' lessons. In disrupting this transitive aesthetic chain, Jean shows that the philosophical problem of how to represent nature has distinct aesthetic consequences: Nature's desire to see the human will as utterly contingent, guided by no natural necessity whatsoever, renders the poet's own ethical authority contingent. The usual analogy between an authorized Nature working through mimesis and the poet's own artistic copying is rendered problematic. If Jean's narrator cannot describe Nature, much less can he avail himself of her moral authority.

Just as it is difficult to say what guarantees that the will necessarily moves toward the good if there is no natural appetite to guide it—the philosophical position embraced by Jean's Lady Nature—so too it is difficult to say what guarantees the ethical effect of a poet's allegorical practice in this world if that practice cannot appeal to the exemplary mimesis previously associated with integumental allegory. In this way, Nature's

voluntarism also effects the allegorical framework of the poem: when necessity in the natural world is decoupled from inclination—when Nature as contingency is shown to be at odds with Genius as determinism and no middle ground between the two is represented—the ethical effects of personification allegory also come unmoored. For Jean, if there is no necessity in human nature neither can there be a necessary hermeneutic guarantee behind the idea that allegory can lead us to make ethical choices. Once mimesis fails, as it does so spectacularly both in the poet's inability to describe Nature's person and in Nature's inability to describe the workings of her own domains in an orderly fashion, what guarantees the truth of the poet's project? While in Alan of Lille, Nature can easily be interpreted as a figure for the poet's own creative energies—Nature's inscriptive process acts as a type for the poet's—in Jean, Nature represents the failure of mimesis and of figurative language. Just as Nature herself is unrepresentable, so too Nature finds it difficult to articulate how, precisely, humans have free will in a world of absolute divine omniscience and omnipotence. The fact that both Nature and will are radically contingent means that representation fails around them. If Nature cannot adequately address the philosophical problem, neither can the poet solve the aesthetic problem. If there is skepticism here, it is not skepticism about the possibility of knowledge—indeed there is almost too much knowledge—there is rather skepticism about the function of an ethical poetics in an academic environment that finds little value in depicting a world that runs according to regular inclinations.¹²⁶

In the *Roman de la Rose*, the natural world manufactured in Nature's forge appears irretrievably broken and therefore unable to function in any exemplary manner. Nature is characterized in this way to poke fun at both the poetic and philosophical expectations that had been placed on the category of nature: she can neither be represented nor can she guarantee all of the contradictory philosophical positions that are attributed to her. The role left for the poet in this world is more academic insider than ethical *vates*; in this world, the poetic vocation is less about transforming the reader spiritually through a literary askesis and more about illustrating the potential consequences of very earthly academic arguments. Nevertheless, Jean de Meun's dramatization of these problems suggests that, while poetry may not be able to offer a clear moral solution to them, it can dramatize the philosophical inconsistencies that beset the extreme voluntarist position on nature and the human will that was becoming the measure of academic orthodoxy when Jean was writing. In doing so, he affirms a related truth: the proper role of poetry is to comment on the politics of nature. Just as free will cannot be wholly understood without recourse to some model of natural inclination, so too poetry cannot be severed from a natural philosophy that seeks to describe the world around us.

Coda: Nature's Laughter

Explicit le Romans de la Rose,
Ou l'Art d'Amours est toute enclose.
Nature rit, si com moy semble.
Quant hic et hec joignent ensemble.
(Here ends the Roman de la Rose
Where the Art of Love is wholly enclosed
Nature laughs, as it appears to me,
When this man and that woman join together.)
—Explicit to *Roman de la Rose* found in Paris,
Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, MS 1126 (ca.
1350–60)

At the end of the *Roman de la Rose*, as the dreamer approaches the object of his desire with the aid of Venus and her troops, the poem shifts into bawdy comedy. The dreamer, imagining himself a pilgrim, thanks Nature for having endowed him with armor and a staff, the *bourdon*, which serves him well and often.¹²⁷ The scene imagines the many uses to which Love's pilgrim puts his staff in pursuit of his eroticized religion and its relics. A. J. Minnis has analyzed the prevailing mood of masculinized sexual comedy in this scene, arguing that it partakes in a highly rhetorical literary imagination characteristic of a clerical milieu "wherein the hardships of enforced celibacy are often relieved by the elaborate sexual fantasies and sometimes express themselves through an interest in virility which is, in every sense, purely academic."¹²⁸ Presumably only this clerical audience would find both Nature's discussion of necessity and the extravagantly puerile humor of sexual innuendo at the poem's end to be equally funny. It is significant then that one mid-fourteenth-century manuscript of the *Rose* ends with a scribal colophon that portrays Nature herself joining in this laughter.¹²⁹ Nature is imagined by this later scribe to be part of the male clerical circle who would enjoy at least some of the jokes made at her putative expense.

Nature's laughter would echo down through the next century and beyond as the *Roman de la Rose* became a thematic touchstone for later poets and, moreover, a text that influenced how vernacular works more generally circulated in manuscript culture.¹³⁰ If Alan of Lille had made a personified Nature one of the most enduring images in medieval poetry, it was Jean de Meun who would refashion her into a controversial figure for human inclination and, in doing so, would set the agenda for the vernacular dream vision that would follow: What is the relation of the dreamer-poet's will to the physical world in which it operates? How is it to be understood? What does he think controls it? What really controls it? Jean had borrowed the language in which he posed these questions from the contemporary academic debate that had erupted over Aristotelianism in the arts and

theology faculties. University masters and poets would both continue to argue over Aristotle and his legacy. If the terms remained relatively unchanged for the next 150 years, the answers given to these questions would change dramatically with each successive generation of writers.

Nature would not always have the last laugh in Jean de Meun's literary followers. These questions of will, necessity, and allegory were taken up most directly in the first half of the fourteenth century by Guillaume de Deguileville, the Cistercian monk whose popular trilogy of dream-vision allegories began as a response to Jean's continuation of the *Rose*. In the first of these poems, the phallic staff of Jean's lover-narrator gets decisively reconverted into the allegorical staff of the Christian pilgrim, as Deguileville assigns to Nature an altogether different voice, at once shrill and insistent.

CHAPTER 4

de vie humaine was the initial installment of a popular allegorical trilogy, an opus that first documents the travails of earthly existence, then traces the soul's journey after judgment as it travels to Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, and finally concludes with that most exemplary pilgrimage, Jesus's sojourn on earth and his return to heaven. Written in 1331 and later expanded and revised around 1355, the *Pèlerinage* narrates the dream narrator's pilgrimage through the world as he attempts to navigate his way to the Heavenly Jerusalem. He encounters the figure of Grace Dieu, who first explains the sacraments to him (most significantly, baptism and communion) and then prepares him for his journey by arming him with scrip and staff. The pilgrim then embarks on his adventure, braving the perilous Sea of the World where he meets a multitude of allegorical and religious figures, before he must ultimately meet up with Death and Grace Dieu on the outskirts of the heavenly city. Deguileville's poem was extremely popular in France as well as in England, where it was translated several times in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and where it influenced writers including Chaucer and Lydgate.²

Critics have rightly noted that one of the central motivations behind Deguileville's *Pèlerinage* is a desire to refashion the potentially skeptical legacy of Jean de Meun's *Rose* into a more morally edifying work. Steven Wright has argued that Deguileville reworked the figurative structures of the *Rose* in order to "cut them off from their secular setting," a move that effectively allows the later writer to "change their referents" into an orthodox theological key.³ Sylvia Huot describes a particularly arresting instance of how the manuscript circulation of both poems enacts this corrective refashioning: Arras, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 845 contains both poems and glosses passages in the *Rose* with their tonic analogues in the *Pèlerinage*.⁴ Scholars have documented several of the ways in which Deguileville speaks back to the *Rose*, noting that the first recension of Deguileville's poem (known to critics as *Vie*₁) overtly praises Jean's poem, while the second (*Vie*₂) removes this praise. An earlier generation of scholars attributed the differences between the two recensions to Deguileville's evolving piety, though they perhaps tell us less about an increasing devotion (the poet had, after all, already taken his monastic vows by the time he wrote the first version) and more about the difficulty of deciding on Jean's "intentions" even at a relatively close historical distance.⁵ The argument offered here is that the figure of Nature is another primary node of Deguileville's dissatisfaction with his predecessor's poetic and philosophical vision, and that the Cistercian's rewriting of this allegorical persona reflects continuing fourteenth-century unease over rationalist modes of interpreting nature.

Writing roughly half a century after Jean de Meun's *Rose*, Deguileville is rarely credited for the radical character of his revisions to the figure of Nature. As Deguileville reorients the ethical dream vision around salvation,

a theme that gets proportionately little attention in Jean's poem, he introduces a correlative devaluation of Nature: she is not just fallible but altogether redundant in comparison with the divine creative power. The opening of the chapter analyzes the scholastic language of Nature's encounter with Grace Dieu, arguing that their disagreement over how to understand Nature's work reflects specifically fourteenth-century concerns over God's absolute as opposed to his ordained powers. These concerns are further amplified in Nature's ally Aristotle. More than a figure for the incompatibility of Greek science and Christian revelation, the pagan philosopher suggests how an emphasis on the quantification of sacramental theology poses a threat to institutional ecclesiastical power. Deguileville had sensed danger not just in the ethical implications of Jean de Meun's *Rose* but in its formal experiments as well. The chapter next addresses how these suspicions, at once moral and aesthetic, would entail significant literary consequences for the way that Deguileville allegorizes the material world. On a formal level, what does a "denatured" mode of reading and writing look like? What guarantees the ethics of the poet's message?

The Nature of Deguileville's *Pèlerinage* was only a single episode in the continuing critical response to Jean's Nature. The chapter concludes with a brief look at another: that of the theologian Jean Gerson who resurrects the personified figure in the *querelle de la Rose*. When, in 1402, Gerson personifies Nature in order to exclaim against the "heresy" of believing that necessity exempts one from a social order based on shared communal expectations of morality, he is yet a further, albeit late, participant in the vernacular philosophical debate over Nature's powers begun by Jean de Meun and kept alive in the writings of Deguileville.

Deguileville and the Ax of Nature

Natura dicta ab eo quod nasci aliquid faciat. Gignendi enim et faciendi potens est. Hanc quidam Deum esse dixerunt, a quo omnia creata sunt et existunt.

(Nature is so called because it causes something to be born, for it has the power of engendering and creating. Some people say that this is God, by whom all things have been created and exist.)

—Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*⁶

Isidore of Seville, that great seventh-century etymologist, bequeathed a succinct definition of nature to the medieval period, one that recognized its

causal, generative force. Nature, the engine of the developmental process, directs the before and after of earthly emergence. Certain about the scope of nature's power, Isidore is uncharacteristically coy about the exact relation between nature and God. The specifics of this relation would remain a source of tension, one that, as we have seen in the preceding chapters, was refocused around Aristotelian ways of knowing the natural world from the thirteenth century onward. Both the twelfth-century Alan of Lille, for whom Nature was a human moral exemplar, and the thirteenth-century Jean de Meun, for whom Nature spoke the transcript of divine providence, acknowledged the functional equivalency between the two, even as Nature always acknowledges herself to be outside of the sphere of Christian revelation. It is this comparative convertibility between the creative powers of divinity and nature, the ability of Nature to speak *for* God if never *as* God, that Deguileville challenges.

The first sign of Deguileville's thorough recasting of Nature's traditional image is her physical appearance. The dreamer sees

une vielle ...
Qui n'avoit pas la chiere liee,
Aincois l'avoit mont courrouciee,
Les mains avoit sous l'esaisellles
Les yex luisans qu'estincelles

(an old woman ... whose face did not look cheerful but instead quite angry. Her hands were tucked under her arms, and her eyes were flashing like sparks).⁷

This description of an old woman deformed by rage is a far cry from the ekphrastic plenitude of Alan's extended allegorical description of the goddess in his *De planctu naturae*, wherein he articulates each of Nature's physical perfections in turn, from her shining celestial hair down to her exquisite, mineralized feet. Deguileville similarly disdains the route chosen by Jean de Meun: the claim that Nature's transcendent physical body is indescribable, beyond not only the poetic powers of the poem's narrator but also of human art more generally.

The physiognomy of Deguileville's Nature is, instead, a recognizable antifeminist stereotype, one at odds with the usual pictorial conventions of depicting medieval Nature. In her analysis of the shifting visual iconography associated with Lady Nature across the medieval and early modern periods, Katharine Park has observed how medieval manuscripts of Alan's *De planctu* and Jean's *Rose* often depict Nature in queenly, flowing robes that bring to mind university academic attire. Embedded in these images of a literally "magisterial" Nature is the idea that "Nature's authority over the created world was both physical and moral."⁸ While Park does not discuss Deguileville's Nature, her thesis still holds true, though in an inversely

correlative way: for Deguileville, Nature's physical degradation is a symptom of the failure of her spiritual efficacy. In the illumination tradition of *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* manuscripts, the magisterial aspects of Nature have been reassigned to the figure of Grace Dieu, who appears in the flowing robes characteristic of the Natures found in Alan of Lille's *De planctu* and Jean de Meun's *Rose* (Figure 7). Deguileville's Nature more closely resembles the elderly, bewimpled figure of Jean de Meun's cynical duenna, La Vieille, than the earthly prosecutrix of the divine plan (Figure 8). This resemblance is suggestive, since, as I argued in Chapter 3, Jean's La Vieille is a figure for unreconstructed naturalism, a mouthpiece for a vulgar understanding of how natural inclinations influence human moral choice.

Nature's unflattering physical makeover anticipates her theological demotion at Deguileville's hands. No longer the *vicaria dei* that she was in both Alan and Jean, she is reassigned as Grace Dieu's adjunct. Now a servant of the servant of God, Deguileville's Nature lacks direct access to the divine mind. Grace Dieu and Nature argue at length about Nature's correct title in terms whose genealogy can be traced back to Deguileville's poetic predecessors. Jean de Meun had affirmed her position as God's "chamberiere," a term that Jean asserts is synonymous with "connetable" (deputy) and "vicaire" (vicar).⁹ Deguileville's Nature initially claims the status of "maistresse," disdaining to be regarded as Grace Dieu's servant. Grace Dieu repeatedly points out that it is only she who is rightly called mistress, and Nature is but her "chamberiere" (or, alternately "baiesse"), a servant whose duty it is to perform her will.¹⁰ The lexical echo reminds readers familiar with the *Rose* about the dangers of giving too much power to Nature. This intertextual "correction" is reinforced even more strongly when, following the discussion of Nature and Grace Dieu, Penance arrives to proclaim her status as the true divine vicar: "M'a Dieu fait sa chamberiere" (God has made me his handmaiden).¹¹ With the appearance of Penance, Deguileville's insistence on Nature's unworthiness to be a divine surrogate is brought full circle. The role of spiritual deputy is reassigned to Penance; Nature is merely a "baiesse." It should be noted that Deguileville returns to Nature's obstructionism in the last installment of his trilogy, *Le pèlerinage de Jésus Christ*. There, Nature encounters Joseph and tries (unsuccessfully) to convince him that Mary's pregnancy must be either illusory or the result of adultery.¹² In rewriting Nature's character and her job description, Deguileville emphasizes his theological distance from his poetic predecessors Alan and Jean. The fourteenth-century poet sees in the natural world only the changeability and unreliability of appearances rather than a source of potential moral authority.



FIGURE 7. Grace Dieu disputes with Nature in Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fr. 376, fol. 11v.



FIGURE 8. La Vieille talks to the dream narrator in the *Roman de la Rose*.
 Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, MS M. 132, fol. 103v.
 Purchased by J. Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913) in 1902.

This poetic debate over Nature's correct role has a recognizable institutional counterpart. Grace Dieu's insistence that Nature is her servant resonates with the language used to mediate the long-standing tension between the theology and arts faculties. As early as 1228, Pope Gregory IX had written to the University of Paris to censure those students who too actively pursued their natural philosophical studies, reminding them that "philosophy was the servant of theology and theology was the queen of sciences. These positions were not to be reversed—the sovereign was not to be placed under the authority of the servant."¹³ It is this perceived competition between natural philosophical and theological ways of looking at the world that also gets activated in the antagonism between Nature and Grace Dieu in the *Pèlerinage*, a poem whose allegory insists on a clear distinction between separate aspects of God's mind—his grace and his created world. While Nature has not been wholly detached from God, she

has been pushed far down the theological pecking order by Deguileville.

If Nature resides at several removes from God, she is also at some distance from the human world of free will and intention. Deguileville's Nature embodies the strict Aristotelian inclination that governs all processes of development: she controls the elements and all things composed of them. By her own account, Nature is just what keeps the seasonal, reproductive engine ticking over; she makes "tout faiz tourner et tendre a fin" (all things turn and move toward their ends).¹⁴ A marginal gloss in one of the fifteenth-century Middle English translations of Deguileville's poem designates her as "Natura naturans, motu Movens," a scholastic phrase denoting nature as the efficient cause of created things, an inherent principle of rest and motion.¹⁵ When Nature complains that Grace Dieu has trespassed in her sublunary sphere, Grace Dieu decisively sets Nature straight, pointing out that the boundary between them—the circle of the moon—constrains only Nature, not herself. Grace Dieu underscores Nature's limitations by suggesting that she has more in common with the nonhuman aspects of the material world than with the human ones:

Vous semblez le porc sauvage
Qui mengut en son boscage
Le glan et point n'a le regart
Dont il li vient ne de quel part,
La teste en terre a et les yex,
Et point en haut ne vers les ciex
Ne regarde dont ce li vient
Fors seulement qu'au glant se tient.

(You are like a wild pig eating acorns in the woods. He has no concern for how they come to him or from where they come. He has his head down and his eyes on the ground and he never looks up toward heaven where they come from but he pays attention only to the acorns.)¹⁶

Like an animal, Nature is unable to recognize and hence participate actively in God's plan. In comparing Nature to the downward-looking beast, Grace Dieu invokes the medieval commonplace that separates humans from animals: the former have the ability to look up toward their creator, while the latter are intent only on fulfilling their bodily needs. In his discussion of this topos, Karl Steel observes that bipedal humans have the ability to direct "their eyes away from mundane desires and toward the heavens" while quadrupeds display "merely terrestrial appetites and irrationality."¹⁷ Nature is barred from participating in the human world by her alignment with the nonrational animal world. Reduced to a figure of necessity, she can have nothing authoritative to contribute to the question of what is truly human.

Again, in order to understand fully the import of Deguileville's portrayal

of a diminished Nature, a comparison with his most proximate source, Jean de Meun, is useful. Sylvia Huot deftly explains the philosophical difference between the two: “whereas Jean presents—and does not explicitly refute—the sacralization of the natural, Deguileville proposes, and then does refute, the naturalization of the sacred.”¹⁸ Huot pithily summarizes the theological difference between the two; I would add that this difference is also about what it means to be an embodied human. Jean de Meun and Guillaume de Deguileville create opposing caricatures of Nature: Jean’s lacks all necessity, emblemizing the contingent aspects of the human spirit, while Deguileville’s is reduced to pure necessity, a mechanical execution of earthly growth and generation lacking the ability to incite choice or champion freedom. Whereas the *Rose’s* Nature was the mouthpiece for the contingency of human free will, its ability to overcome inherent inclination, in the *Vie*, this role is reassigned to Grace Dieu. For Jean, Nature was able to pronounce on what makes the human uniquely human (free will); for Deguileville, Nature has nothing legitimate to say on the topic because what makes the human exceptional is a gift from God (grace) rather than anything that could inhere in a material body (whether it is defined as rational capacity, will, or even a soul). In the *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*, it is not that the human is exceptional to nature; rather, the human is shown not to have any a priori ontological bond with the rest of the material world.

The argument between Grace Dieu and Nature, moreover, reveals not just a general objection to naturalism but a specific intervention into scholastic conversations about how natural necessity was seen to operate. This academic target becomes clear when we look at the specific terms in which Nature and Grace Dieu argue over how, precisely, Nature carries out her work. When Grace Dieu asserts that Nature is not only her maidservant but also “mon oustil ou instrument”—her tool or instrument—this claim initiates a passionate disagreement as to the mechanics of how the divine plan is made manifest here on earth.¹⁹ Nature does not properly understand the source of her generative powers, according to Grace Dieu, who compares Nature to the ax that turns against the carpenter or the pot that argues with the potter about its appropriate shape. Nature counters that, just as a carpenter cannot build a house without an ax, “Tout aussi ne devez vous mie / Nulle chose sans moi faire” (so you should do nothing at all without me).²⁰ Nature concludes that her ax is the prerequisite for earthly making. While the image of the carpenter’s ax had a biblical origin—Isaiah 10:15—by the fourteenth century, it had acquired a more proximate and controversial set of associations in the argument over how nature worked.²¹ As discussed in the first chapter, this image was employed by thirteenth-century writers wishing to emphasize the intimate relation between God and his terrestrial productions. The rhetorical figure was found in both scholastic and popular writings, in both Aquinas and vernacular encyclopedias such as the *Image du monde*. When such writers troped Nature as an ax, they imagined nature

to be an instrumental force executing the divine will, an indispensable sublunary intermediary.

Grace Dieu champions an opposing notion of nature's creative powers when she reminds Nature that the ax is only a figure, not a reality. Grace Dieu points out that, unlike an actual carpenter who makes his living by his ax—who must use his ax because “Necessite garder li fait / Pour ce que de pain faute n’ait” (Necessity makes him keep it so that he will not lack bread)—Grace Dieu can create without Nature if she so chooses:

Mais de vous je n’ai nul mestier,
N’en aiez ja vostre cuer fier!
Sans coignie puis bien ouvrer,
Forgier, doler et charpenter,
Sans oustil et sans instrument
De tout puis faire a mon talent.
A moi comparer ne doit on
Nul charpentier ne nul charon,
Quar j’ai singuliere poste
De tout faire a ma volente.

(But I have no need of you. Do not be proud in heart over that any longer. I can work well without an ax. I can fashion, hew and shape without a tool or an instrument. I can do all things through my will. I cannot be compared to a carpenter or some wheelwright, for I have the sole power to do what I want.)²²

Nature is, according to Grace Dieu, not just a bad servant but a bad rhetorician. Nature has failed to understand the limits of analogy. Grace Dieu's powers are incomparable, because she acts contingently, through her unconstrained will (“ma volente”). Nature is just a tool of convenience, one that can be dispensed with at any time. Furthermore, the tool comparison was only used to instruct Nature's “engin rude” (l. 1934), that is, her crude intelligence. Within the allegorical scheme of the poem, this phrase proleptically associates Nature with the figure of Rude Entendement (Natural Understanding), the literal-minded *vilein* who will later attempt to arrest the dreamer's progress only to be rebuked by Raison.²³ As with Nature, Rude Entendement's physical ugliness is a sign of his moral deformation just as his literal-minded naturalism signifies for his spiritual deficiencies. Within the wider context of the late medieval tropology of nature, the disagreement over whether one can figure God and Nature as, respectively, artisan and ax reminds us that these rhetorical figures were regularly employed by earlier writers seeking to explain the amplitude and limits of Nature's powers, a tropology explored in more detail in the first chapter.

After the late thirteenth-century censure of naturalism, moreover, Grace

Dieu's insistence that her power is both "singulaire" and that it derives from God's will suggests that the disagreement over Nature's ax can also be read as a referendum on a Thomist model of secondary causation, the idea that nature's powers mediately carry out the divine plan. For Aquinas, the ax of nature was a figure that explained how the divine plan was executed through a chain of causes that linked God to the terrestrial world. To put it in Aristotelian terms, while God is the final cause of his creation, the ax is the efficient cause, the thing through which an entity attains its purposed end.²⁴ Aquinas's model also imagined divine productive powers as inhering in God's intellect rather than his will, a position at odds with Grace Dieu's insistence on the primacy of divine volition. This Thomist notion of "double causality" was rejected by the 1277 condemnation among its censure of several compatibilist propositions.²⁵

The debate over Nature's ax in the *Pèlerinage* is a popular, literary response to an academic trend prompted by the condemnation, one that saw many early fourteenth-century theologians including Duns Scotus and William of Ockham preferring to speculate about the absolute nature of God's power rather than to attempt reconciling this power with its expression in the mundane world.²⁶ God's absolute power—the unlimited potential of divine contingency—was opposed to his ordained power—what he had chosen to do in creating the world in which we live. His absolute power is what he could have done (a subject for theological speculation); his ordained power, what is evident in the visible world around us (the subject of natural philosophy). God creates the visible world around us through his own free volition rather than from any necessity or through any mediation. He did not have to create the world in this particular way; rather, he had freely chosen to do so. By the end of the thirteenth century, orthodox theologians began to worry that Aristotelian natural philosophy had limited God's omnipotence by imposing "rules" about how the world (representing his ordained power) was supposed to operate. Many of the propositions condemned in 1277 were aimed at lifting this type of necessity from divine action. According to David C. Lindberg, references to God's absolute power "were a frequent characteristic of fourteenth-century natural philosophy, indeed, of all philosophy and theology in that century," since, for late scholastics, "God's absolute power was limited only by the law of non-contradiction."²⁷ In elaborating the difference between God's *potentia absoluta* as opposed to his *potentia ordinata*, such thinkers switched from analyzing Thomist ends to exploring voluntarist means: the question was no longer "why does God do something?" (for the *summum bonum*) but instead "how does God do it?" (through a power whose only constraint was its logical consistency).

Such writers rejected the idea of a creative power in any way shared between God and Nature—the idea of Nature's ax—and instead emphasized God's direct intervention in the world. As William J. Courtenay has argued,

both Scotus and Ockham disagreed with the Thomist model of secondary causation; for Ockham, anything that God could do through a secondary cause such as nature, he could also do directly.²⁸ According to Courtenay, the fourteenth-century distinction between God's absolute and ordained powers was principally used

as a means of attacking necessitarianism, particularly in the physical and metaphysical structures of the created order.... The distinction was used to question the necessity of inherent, innate qualities or properties that are "always" found in or associated with physical objects; the necessity of causal relationships (that fire always causes heat or burns); the eternity and necessity of the physical universe and its operations; or the necessity of the laws of the physical universe, such as "two bodies cannot occupy the same place at the same time" or "the same body cannot be in two places at the same time."²⁹

This decoupling of natural causation from divine power would have significant consequences for how writers like Ockham consequently viewed human nature. As early as his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* (1317–18), Ockham had been arguing for the separation of human will from sensory perception and the rational faculty. The will has the power to choose to do anything whatsoever, not just choose from among those things presented to it by reason (the view of Aquinas). The Ockhamist view effectively cuts the will off from the world of natural inclinations. Ockham rejected the Thomist teleological relation between man and God—the idea that all humans seek the good, a desire implanted in them by God, and that they strive for this perfection in the same way that the rest of the natural world strives to reach its final form.³⁰

Just as these fourteenth-century scholastics challenged the idea that Nature works according to causes that link her work to divine ends, so too Deguileville's allegory resists this model of nature. Deguileville's Grace Dieu refutes the idea of nature as an imperative secondary cause in order to argue for the absolute autonomy of God's grace. Grace Dieu asserts that Nature, despite her protests, is never a causal agent in her own right, not even a secondary one whose influence extends to the human. This is not to suggest that Deguileville was a cardcarrying Ockhamist (indeed he would have objected to many of the theologian's doctrines), but rather to argue that his poem responds to the fourteenth-century evolution of the academic debate over natural necessity, much as Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Rose* had done with respect to the prevailing arguments that marked its moment of production more than fifty years before.

Not just a belated or nostalgic longing for the orthodoxies of the 1270s, Deguileville's representation of Nature's ax responds to a contemporary

sense in the 1320s and 1330s that these questions were again up for reconsideration. The question of how compatible God's will was with a rationalized vision of nature was reanimated in part by changing orthodox attitudes to Aquinas and his works. The fear of Thomist naturalism that had marked the Parisian controversy had begun to dissipate, and Aquinas was canonized in 1323. In 1325, then bishop of Paris Étienne Bourret effectively reversed those parts of his predecessor Tempier's 1277 condemnation that dealt with the compatibility of natural philosophy and theology as articulated by Aquinas.³¹ In invalidating the commissions of his predecessor, Bourret was riding a wave of pro-Thomist feeling. While Aquinas's teachings were not universally approved in the fourteenth century—nominalists (such as Pierre d'Ailly) would remain critics—these two events, close in time, served as an imprimatur of the orthodoxy of Aquinas's views, and they took hold in many Dominican institutions and certain university arts faculties. Aquinas's assertion that "fides praesupponit cognitionem naturalem sicut gratia naturalem" (faith presupposes natural knowledge, just as grace does nature) was no longer under the long shadow of Tempier's disapproval.³² When Deguileville was writing the first recension of his poem around 1330, the questions surrounding the compatibility of Aristotelian natural philosophy with revealed theology were not mere relics of university politics past but matters of immediate topical concern.

I have been arguing that Deguileville, a popular religious poet, substantively engages with the finer points of scholastic debate over natural necessity, an assertion that assumes a significant interchange between the university context and the monastic one in which Deguileville wrote. One might be inclined to argue against this view that Deguileville's interest might more accurately be described as a general disdain for naturalism rather than a more specific interest in the stakes of the abstruse theological arguments current in Paris when he composed the first version of his *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*.³³ Yet there is another piece of textual evidence to support the idea that Deguileville was sensitive to the political implications of this debate over necessity; this is suggested by one of the few significant changes that Deguileville introduces between the first recension (*Vie₁*) written around 1331 and the subsequent revised version (*Vie₂*) that dates from around 1355. In *Vie₂*, Nature's ax is markedly blunter. While Nature and Grace Dieu still disagree over the limits of the former's power and while Nature ultimately submits to Grace Dieu's authority, the two are not allowed to air the detailed arguments over necessity that take up a large part of their encounter in the earlier version.³⁴ This change is particularly suggestive in light of one of Deguileville's substantive additions to *Vie₂*: a prolonged discussion of the dangers of celestial determinism that appears later in the poem as part of the pilgrim's encounter with the bifurcated allegorical figure of Astrology-Astronomy.³⁵ This roughly 500-line addition addresses the problem not of nature as a secondary cause but of the stars as secondary

cause.³⁶ The rebuttal of “astrodeterminism”—the belief that celestial influences determine a person’s destiny—was a mainstream endeavor and one in which almost all late medieval philosophers and theologians—Augustinian or Aristotelian—participated. Whereas *Vie*₁ undertakes a nuanced rebuttal of nature as secondary cause, the latter version omits it, adding a much less controversial refutation of necessity as celestial secondary cause. Any discussion of Deguileville’s motivations for these changes must be speculative; however, taken together, they do suggest that the problem of natural necessity was one of several significant nodes for revision on which the poet focused his attention. One reason for these revisions may be that refuting the necessity of nature’s causal powers became less of a compelling philosophical project as views antagonistic to Aristotle’s physics became more controversial. Following on from Aquinas’s canonization, there was a more sympathetic attitude toward a compatibilist approach that saw a causal nature carrying out God’s plan. This swing of the philosophical pendulum is evidenced by the prohibition of Ockham’s physics at the University of Paris in 1341 by the arts faculty, who were critical of his beliefs about universals and his attempt to reduce Aristotelian ontological categories to just two: substance and quality. According to William J. Courtenay, “what was now being prohibited was the *scientia Okamica*, and in its place the ‘*scientia Aristotelis* and of his Commentator Averroes’ was being required, ‘except in those cases that are against the faith.’”³⁷ This prohibition was just one part of a broader anti-Ockhamist campaign that took place between 1339 and 1346 and that included a 1346 letter censoring the teaching of Ockham’s thought by Pope Clement VI.³⁸ One of the consequences of this shifting philosophical temper was that attention was being refocused on God’s ordained rather than his absolute powers. The differences between Deguileville’s first and second recensions are similarly instructive here. By removing the argument over Nature’s ax—an argument in favor of nonnecessity in relation to both divine and human wills—the later version of the poem sidesteps a potentially problematic expression of extreme voluntarism. Instead, *Vie*₂ simply asserts the correctness of Grace Dieu’s views on the basis of scriptural authority, and then adds a long passage rejecting a noncontroversial version of natural necessity in the form of astrodeterminism. In doing so, *Vie*₂ explicitly rejects the dialogic mode embraced in the earlier recension of *Vie*₁ as well as by Jean de Meun in his *Rose*, a mode that allowed for two extreme interpretations of nature to be given a hearing side by side.

If Deguileville omitted this dialogic inquiry into Nature’s powers from the latter version of his poem, the validity of Aristotelian natural philosophy in general was to remain a matter of concern in both recensions. This concern appears nowhere more clearly than in Deguileville’s personification of Aristotle, another allegorical figure associated with the claims of necessity. With their argument over the ax, Nature and Grace Dieu had

begun a discussion of how compatible divine revelation is with Greek physics. When the pagan philosopher himself appears in the poem shortly thereafter, Aristotelian physics is once again on trial, though the charges against him and his *scientia* have widened: his viewpoint not only shows ignorance of revealed truth but also poses a potential threat to the very foundations of ecclesiastical authority.

Ventriloquizing Aristotle

Once Nature submits herself to Grace Dieu's authority, the disagreement over natural influence would appear to have been settled. Yet the poet evidently wants to pursue the limits of Aristotelian natural philosophy in more detail, even at the expense of narrative redundancy. Grace Dieu next introduces an episode of past narration wherein she recounts previous skepticism about the Eucharist voiced by Nature and her partisans. Outraged by supernatural interference in her realm, Nature sends for Aristotle to debate the nature of the Eucharist on her behalf against Grace Dieu's champion, Sapience. Aristotle asserts that the Eucharist is a type of sophistry, a trick to deceive believers, since its diminutive size cannot contain the spiritual bounty asserted by the church. Sapience, through a series of exempla, refutes Aristotle's claims that the Eucharist is deceptive because it transgresses the physical laws that apply to the rest of the world.

A previous generation of critics dismissed the exchange between Sapience and Aristotle as a digression, a hiccup in the temporality of the plot that merely repeats the contest between Nature and Grace Dieu and, hence, another example of Deguileville's lack of narrative control over his allegory. The poem's medieval audience, however, appeared to find the theological issues raised in this scene more compelling. Not only was the poem as a whole extremely popular in its original French as well as translations into multiple languages, the argument between Nature, Grace Dieu, and their respective proxies was reworked into a freestanding play.³⁹ More recent critics have argued for the importance of this scene to the literary and ethical themes of the poem as a whole, though they disagree as to how sympathetic Deguileville is to Aristotle's teaching. Stephanie Kamath and Jessica Rosenfeld have independently argued that this representation of Aristotle is not necessarily a critique of the philosopher, and that Deguileville's invocation of him here and in other moments suggests that Aristotle's works, particularly the *Ethics*, remain a productive force for the poet.⁴⁰ Sarah Kay, on the other hand, argues that in this scene we see the insufficiency of a pagan physics and ethics that fail to explain an overdetermined sacramental object, the eucharistic wafer, that is at once an embodied thing subject to physical laws and a spiritual performative that supersedes such laws.⁴¹

Following Kay, my reading of this scene frames it as a nuanced commentary on Aristotelian understandings of the sacrament that had come to prominence in the preceding century and that were being challenged at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The exchange between Sapience and Aristotle demonstrates that, like most writers of his day, Deguileville's views on the Eucharist were closely linked to his views on nature. Like the debate over the analogy of the ax, this exchange engages with the specifics of what happens to the consecrated bread on the altar. Having already blunted Nature's ax and shown Nature herself to be an ethically inconsequential shrew, Deguileville reanimates Aristotle in order to refute decisively the dangers of sacramental naturalism. While, as I have been arguing, this tactic takes some of its urgency from the revival of Thomist fortunes when Deguileville was writing, it is specifically impelled by fourteenth-century views of how the sacraments were to be understood institutionally.

Like the reanimated Aristotle of the mid-thirteenth-century *De pomo sive de morte Aristotilis*, Deguileville's Aristotle is an ideological response to its contemporary scholastic moment. Whereas *De pomo*'s Aristotle offered a syncretic vision of Greek philosophy and Christian revelation, an optimism about how Christianity could use pagan science, Deguileville's Aristotle is designed to show the incompatibility of the two; with the legacy of 1277 still echoing in French intellectual life, this rejection suggests that Deguileville sided with those, increasingly only a vocal minority, for whom the Thomist approach was seen as dangerously rationalist.⁴² In Deguileville's hands, Aristotle represents a naive, empirical understanding of the world incapable of seeing the higher truth of revealed knowledge, a witness for the opposition in the dreamer's continuing education on the necessity of sacraments such as baptism and communion.

More than just a straw man for pagan science, however, Aristotle symbolizes the particular threat of a natural philosophical understanding of revealed truth, the tools of the arts faculty brought to bear on questions of theology. The contest between Sapience and Aristotle is specifically framed as a quodlibetal debate where the two masters square off against one another: Sapience is Grace Dieu's proxy; Aristotle is Nature's own clerk ("un sien clerc Aristote").⁴³ A seemingly neutral description, the idea of Aristotle as "scriptor naturae" was actually a term of disdain used by Neoplatonists unsympathetic to Aristotle's materialist investigations.⁴⁴ This epithet is the opening salvo in a concerted attack on the medieval discipline of natural philosophy that Aristotle had metonymically come to symbolize. The illuminations make clear that Aristotle is imagined as an arts master; for example, that found in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF) fr. 376 portrays Aristotle with a tonsure and wearing an academic gown (Figure 9). Interestingly, Sapience in this illumination is virtually identical with the earlier figure of Grace Dieu (Figure 7). The perception that this is a

“university Aristotle” is reinforced by the fact that the philosopher argues against the possibility of the Eucharist from two discrete places: the authority of past philosophers (“I have never heard it said”) and his own empirical experience (“I have never in my life seen”). According to the historian of science Edward Grant, previous textual authority and sensory observation were the twin bases of medieval natural philosophy.⁴⁵ Scholastics such as Bacon and Grosseteste, following Aristotle, had argued for the senses as the gateway to immaterial knowledge. To lack a sense was, for such scholastics, to lack a *scientia*. Rather than a just pagan, one whose studies of the natural world led to a higher understanding and deserved the reward of potential Christian salvation—the presumed fate of *De pomo*’s Aristotle—Aristotle’s knowledge of physical laws are shown to be a hermeneutic dead end for Deguileville.

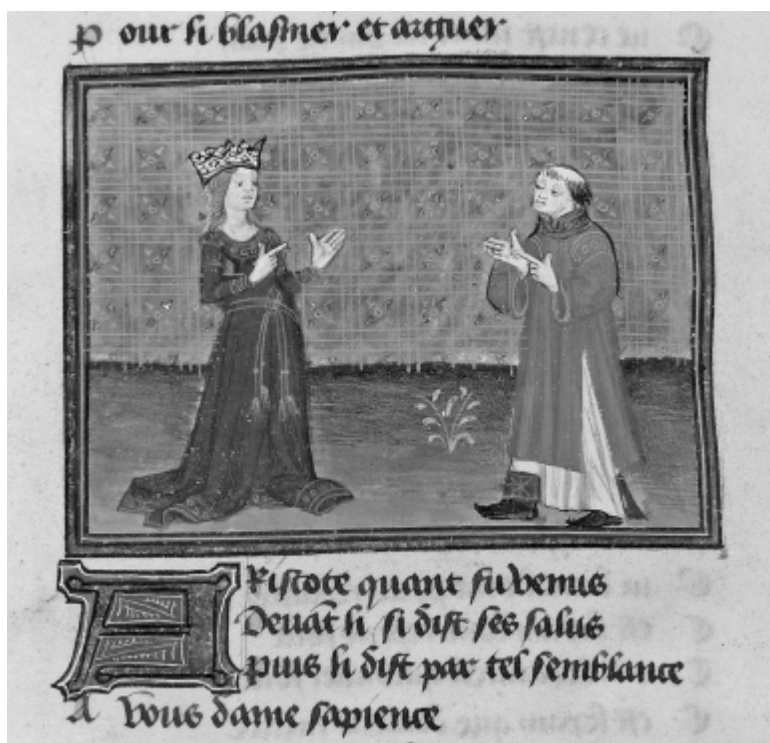


FIGURE 9. Sapience disputes with Aristotle in Deguileville’s *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fr. 376, fol. 19v.

The debate between Sapience and Aristotle revolves around precisely this question of which hermeneutic principles can legitimately be applied to the sacraments as well as the degree to which divine (as opposed to earthly) knowledge is quantifiable at all. By reviving Aristotle as an interlocutor on the Eucharist, Deguileville is able to air particularly fourteenth-century concerns about the previous century’s tendency to explain

transubstantiation according to Aristotelian principles of quantification. In the poem, Aristotle complains of the physical impossibility of this strange bread, “ce pain qui est deguises.”⁴⁶ Sapience, he asserts, has “disguised” Christ in a counterfactually small space, a space that contradicts the basic laws of Aristotelian physics:

Et encor plus ce me desplaist
Et Nature pas ne s'en test
Que ma maxime approuvee
Faussee avez, et reprouvee
Oncques mais voir parler n'oï
Ne en ma vie je ne vi
Quë un tout, quel quë il fëüst,
De sa part greigneur ne fëüst
Mes la partie, ce savez,
Aussi grant com son tout avez
Fait qui est grant mespresure
Encontre moi et contre Nature.

(And it displeases me even more—and Nature is not silent about it—that you have proved my maxim false and refuted it. I have never heard it said—and I have never in my life seen—that a whole, whatever it might be, was not greater than a part. But as you know, you have made the part as great as the whole, and this is a great outrage against me and against Nature.)⁴⁷

Aristotle dislikes the fact that the “disguised” Christ hiding in the bread contradicts the Aristotelian law that a part cannot exceed the whole.⁴⁸ It seems impossible to him that either Christ’s actual body or the heavenly plenitude attributed to him could be enclosed in something as small as a wafer. Aristotle repeatedly insists that the physical properties of the bread wafer do not sufficiently explain its inner properties, charges that Sapience counters with a series of ingenuous metaphors comparing the host to other phenomena that are physically small but that contain something metaphysically larger than themselves: for instance, the human heart can be filled with the sovereign good or the memory can recall the buildings and roads of a great city. In this encounter, Aristotle’s rigid insistence on the inviolability of physical law avails him nothing in the search for higher knowledge, and, unsurprisingly, the encounter ends with Aristotle meekly admitting defeat.

In order to appreciate more fully Deguileville’s revival of Aristotle as Nature’s clerk, it is necessary to recall the eucharistic theology that the Cistercian had inherited. Alongside the incarnation, the sacraments were perhaps the most significant case study in the connection between the

material and immaterial worlds, and, as such, they were to prove perennially vexing to medieval scholastics. There was much debate during the late medieval period about how the sacraments functioned as effective signs—that is, how it was that they could, in effect, cause what they signified. The Eucharist was the most ontologically troubling of all because theologians had to explain how spiritual power—the body of Christ—inheres in material substance—the bread on the altar. Debates about this aspect of communion had taken place almost since the founding of Christianity, but, as Miri Rubin and others have observed, there was an explosion in the production of commentaries, *quaestiones*, and determinations with names such as *De sacramentis altari* in the wake of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215.⁴⁹ Lateran IV had used the term “transubstantiated” to describe what happens when the words of institution (“hoc est corpus meum”) are spoken and the bread becomes the substance of Christ. This formulation was elaborated over the course of the thirteenth century, as church doctrine was measured against the “experience” of Aristotelians who sought to understand the physical logic of transubstantiation: How could the accidents of bread and wine remain after the substance of bread was evacuated, replaced by the body and blood of Christ? The accepted understanding became that of Thomas Aquinas who believed that the substance of Christ was attended by the accidents of bread, a belief that posed an acute Aristotelian paradox, since the accidents of bread no longer inhered in any substance. The position raised further physical questions, as Edith Sylla notes, that involved not just questions of quantity and quality (What happened to the substance of the bread? What happened to the accidents of Christ?) but also quantifiable motion (By what movement did Christ come to be present in the bread? What kind of change was involved?).⁵⁰ Such questions gave rise to discussions that came to be known collectively as “the physics of the Eucharist” discussed by writers such as Albertus Magnus, Aquinas, and, later, Scotus and Ockham among others. These writers, while all accepting the real presence of Christ and attempting to work in the framework outlined by Lateran IV, posed divergent physical explanations of these phenomena.

One of the primary sacramental disagreements between the thirteenth-century Aristotelians such as Aquinas and later fourteenth-century writers such as Scotus and Ockham was over whether God appropriated material things (such as communion wafers and wine) as a means of grace. Aquinas had stressed that sacraments were causes in their own right as well as signs of divine grace.⁵¹ In trying to conserve as much of the “physics” of the Eucharist as possible, he sought to explain metaphysical beliefs in terms of contemporary hylomorphic understandings of form and matter. As Marilyn McCord Adams argues, while Aquinas always acknowledged the supernatural nature of the miracle, he preferred to allow only a single miracle in the process and to explain other aspects of the

change in terms of the usual operations of Aristotelian science (it was on these grounds that he objected to consubstantiation, a solution that necessitates two subjects inhering in a single form, a phenomenon disallowed by Aristotelian physics).⁵² Though Aquinas's hylomorphic explanation of transubstantiation was adopted as the orthodox solution, there was much debate over how satisfactory the solution he offered actually was. The 1277 condemnation, for instance, tried to legislate the view that God could make the bread disappear at the moment of consecration, but that its accidents would remain because they inhered in the remaining quantity rather than in its substance.⁵³ In the wake of this pronouncement, early fourteenth-century theologians such as Scotus and Ockham moved away from arguing about the natural causal relations at work and instead focused on redefining the categories under which it was discussed: what does one mean when one says "accident" and "subject"?⁵⁴ These writers shifted the discussion from physics to logic, and Ockham would later suggest that, because transubstantiation potentially involves the annihilation of material bread, no natural explanation pertained to it. Though he acknowledged what the church taught as orthodoxy, it is clear that Ockham believed the transformation was primarily a matter of faith rather than reason and that, particularly in this instance, natural philosophy had little bearing on revelation. The primary goal in Ockham's discussion of the Eucharist is, in Edith Sylla's words, to emphasize "the absolute power of God, on the one hand, and to demonstrat[e] how the sense of propositions can be explained without multiplying entities on the other."⁵⁵

Like these fourteenth-century theologians, Deguileville's *Sapience* seeks to uncover the logical inconsistencies of the analytical and quantitative ways of viewing the Eucharist that sought to accommodate as far as possible the sacramental miracle with the physical properties of the bread. When *Sapience* challenges Aristotle's assertion that a part cannot be larger than its corresponding whole, she queries the philosopher on the physical size of the human heart: How large is it? Aristotle admits that it is so small as hardly to make a satisfactory meal for a small bird of prey. *Sapience* then compares the diminutive physical size of the heart to its nearly infinite capacity to hold, in Aristotle's own words in the *Ethics*, the infinite "sovereign good." *Sapience* taunts Aristotle

Or faut il donc, dist Sapience,
 Que remplace a soufissance
 Tu li truisses ou que faussee
 Soit ten' autorite vulgueue,
 Par la quelle as prouve et dit
 Quë u monde n'a point de vuit,
 Quar d'aucune chose il sera
 Rempli ou vuidenge i ara.

“Now you must find something to fill it [i.e., the heart] to capacity,” said Sapience, “or your well-known teaching would be refuted, in which you argued and stated that there is no void anywhere in the world, for it must be filled by something or it must be empty.”⁵⁶

Easily recognizable in this passage is the influential Aristotelian doctrine on the impossibility of void space within the plenum, a view that led to the wellknown cliché “nature abhors a vacuum.”⁵⁷ According to Aristotle, our everyday sense perception tells us that everything is filled with something, even if it is colorless, odorless air. According to Edward Grant, Aristotle’s physics was largely built on the idea that no motion could take place in a void; therefore, since nature was imagined as the constant motion of generation and corruption subject to inherent inclinations, there could be no vacuum in the cosmos.⁵⁸ Sapience’s mockery of Aristotle’s belief in the impossibility of a void is not just a schoolyard taunt. This physical doctrine had fallen out of favor precisely because of post-1277 scholastic theories about transubstantiation. Several of Tempier’s propositions were aimed at proving that God could, if he so desired, create a void, and subsequent philosophers began to theorize the void that Aristotle had rejected.⁵⁹ Later fourteenth-century scholastics such as Jean Buridan went so far as to argue that a void could exist by analogy with the Eucharist: just as quantitative extension existed without inhering in a body when bread transubstantiated into Christ, so too such a space could exist within the plenum.⁶⁰ Sapience’s mockery could thus be seen to participate in this philosophical and theological project of showing that something really can come of nothing.

A similarly pointed critique is evident in the disagreement between Sapience and Aristotle over the dimensive quality of Christ’s bodily presence in the Eucharist. While the *mise-en-scène* allows a pre-Christian pagan to voice criticism of the Eucharist, Aristotle’s questions enact the drama of Christian scholastics who argued over the extent to which one can apply physical concepts such as quantity and proportion to explain how Christ exists on the sacramental altar. Aristotle’s objections to the sacrament are largely based on the problem of size. How, he asks, can something so large—the glorified Christ—fit into something so small, a wafer so tiny that he can easily hold fourteen of them in his hand? It would have been better, according to the philosopher,

Que le manoir fust aussi grant
Com la paisture si est grant,
Ou la paisture aussi petite
Com la maison si est petite

(that the dwelling was as large as the nourishment or that the nourishment was as small as the dwelling).⁶¹

In this way, the Eucharist contradicts an established premise of Aristotelian physics, that “a body is located in a place, only if its dimensions are commensurate with the dimensions of the place.”⁶² But this physical anomaly is not just logically unsatisfactory, it smacks of divine deception. This discrepancy must be corrected, for only then, Aristotle asserts, can one know “sans decevance” what is contained within.⁶³

Instead of answering Aristotle’s questions directly, Sapience refutes him with a series of analogies about how Christ’s real presence exceeds the visible bread. Not only does she not attempt to explain the logic of presence, she actively ridicules the enterprise of doing so in terms drawn from Aristotelian physics. Sapience’s refutation of the logic of quantity is a refutation of this quite conspicuous scholastic tendency.⁶⁴ The two problems that Aristotle raises here—how the immensity of Christ’s body is contained by the host and how Christ can be fully present in each of the eucharistic elements simultaneously—had been addressed most influentially in Aquinas’s explanation of transubstantiation. In order to explain what it was that the accidents of bread inhered in once the substance of bread was gone, Aquinas had to argue that “after transubstantiation the quantity of the bread or wine served the role that had previously been served by the substance, so that the qualities did at least have the quantity to inhere in and were not entirely without subject.”⁶⁵ Aquinas discusses eucharistic conversion throughout his writings, addressing it most succinctly in his *Summa theologiae*. In answer to Aristotle’s question, Aquinas would have said that Christ’s body does not exist dimensionally as the bread does, but that it exists there as a substance.⁶⁶ It is there as a substance by way of “natural concomitance”—that is, “if two things be really united, then wherever the one is really, there must the other also be.”⁶⁷ For Aquinas, the size problem identified by Aristotle is not a problem because “the quantitative dimensions of Christ’s Body are not there by the power of the sacrament.”⁶⁸ Moreover, all parts of Christ are present in all parts of the Eucharist, just as “the whole nature of air [is present] in a great or small amount of air, and the whole nature of a man in a big or small individual.”⁶⁹ This effort to make quantity the basis of transubstantiation was rejected by later Franciscan writers including John Peckham, Peter John Olivi, and Scotus. Aquinas’s physical “fix”—the idea that the quantity of the remaining bread was the substance in which the accidents inhered in the absence of a proper subject—was rejected by these writers as theologically and philosophically incoherent. While these critics responded in the technical language of Aristotelian logic and physics, they also regularly appealed to Hugh of St. Victor’s *De sacramentis*, a text that resists that idea that the Eucharist demands a theory of substantial conversion. Instead, Hugh had argued that the most direct explanation for why Christ’s body is not apparent to our senses or how it can be in multiple places at once is by appealing to divine omnipotence.⁷⁰ According to David Burr, these Franciscan theologians disliked the necessity involved in

Aquinas's arguments for transubstantiation, fearing that a theory of substance conversion "unduly limits the sphere of God's power."⁷¹

Like these later medieval theologians, Deguileville's Sapience ridicules the quantification of the Eucharist, suggesting that physics has no explanatory purchase on sacramental efficacy. Sapience conspicuously replaces Aristotle's language of quantity with a series of domesticating analogies that emphasize God's omnipotence: just as the heart can contain the sovereign good, just as the memory can contain the streets and buildings of Rome, so too can the bread contain the glorified Christ whose sacrifice makes the communicant one with the church. Sapience explains that she has refuted Aristotle's axiom that the part cannot be equal to the whole by making the broken bread the equivalent of its unbroken unity: consider a shattered mirror, she says, and you will see your face reflected back to you in each piece just as you did in its original form.⁷² This comparison of the broken bread to a shattered mirror is not original to Deguileville; it is found in scholastic discussions of the Eucharist both before and after him.⁷³ It was an analogy, however, that Aquinas had specifically refuted in the *Summa theologiae*, as part of his discussion of how Christ remains under the species of the bread even after it is broken. "Some say" that this is like a mirror that reflects the same image whole as it does when it is broken, but, he continues, "the comparison is not perfect, because the multiplying of such images results in the broken mirror on account of the various reflections in the various parts of the mirror; but here there is only one consecration, whereby Christ's body is in this sacrament."⁷⁴ Aquinas claims that the analogy does not hold since multiple reflections are needed to produce the multiple images visible in each shard; in the sacrament of the altar, it is the singular consecration ("hoc est corpus meum") that produces the multiplicity of Christ's body in all parts of the bread. Unlike Aquinas, Deguileville resists quantifying or specifying how precisely Christ's body exists in the host; instead, the poet prefers to employ analogies with a homiletic feel in order to explain eucharistic mysteries to a lay audience.

For Deguileville, the problem of the Eucharist is not a problem of correctly parsing the laws of bodies and places; it is a sign of the wider and more intractable conflict between Grace Dieu and Nature that he is dramatizing. Whereas Aquinas had insisted that faith is not contrary to nature, though acknowledging that it did at times go beyond things knowable through reason, Deguileville, on the other hand, asserts that the two are actively opposed in the case of the sacraments, representing this conflict first in the fight between Nature and Grace Dieu and then again in the argument between Aristotle and Sapience.⁷⁵ In doing so, Deguileville follows a tradition established by early patristic writers such as Ambrose (340–97) who had framed the intractability of this opposition in his treatise on the sacraments. In discussing the disparity between what is seen and what is understood in the Eucharist, Ambrose describes his explanatory task

as validating this binary: “Let us prove that this is not what nature made, but what the blessing consecrated [*probemus non hoc esse quod natura formavit, sed quod benedictio consecravit*], and the power of blessing is greater than that of nature, because by blessing nature itself is changed.”⁷⁶ He offers as evidence biblical episodes where grace unequivocally trumps nature, such as when Moses strikes his staff against a rock and water pours forth or when the prophet raises his staff and parts the Red Sea. So too does the Eucharist contravene the natural order according to Ambrose, who chastises those who would seek a rational explanation of the sacramental: “Why do you seek the order of nature [*naturae ordinem*] in the Body of Christ, seeing that the Lord Jesus Himself was born of a Virgin, not according to nature? It is the true Flesh of Christ which was crucified and buried, this is then truly the Sacrament of His Body.”⁷⁷ In a similar vein, Deguileville has Sapience conclude her argument with Aristotle by asserting that the issue is not rightly the quantitative aspects of the bread but the operations of Grace Dieu by which the transformation takes place. Sapience declines to discuss precisely how Christ is present in the eucharistic bread, whether locally, virtually, or representationally. In insisting on the reality of Christ’s presence she asserts that it is not *how* he comes to be there but *why* he is there in the first place that matters. She revisits the language of proportionality initially invoked by Aristotle, replying to his objection that the host’s spiritual nourishment does not correlate to the size of the container. Contra Aristotle, Sapience asserts that the bread is, in fact, proportionate in two ways. First, because the physical heart is small, the physical bread is small. However, since the heart’s metaphysical capacity is great, so too the sovereign good of the Eucharist contained within is equally great. Moreover, Sapience claims that the bread works according to the needs of each individual Christian:

Le peu au peu, le grant au grant
 Ai fait a droit correspondant,
 Quar selonc ce que le cuer est,
 Aussi faite la pasture est:
 Se petit est, petit pain a;
 Së assez veut, ens trouvera
 Ce qui le pourra saouler
 Et emplir et assasier.

(I have made the small for the small and the great for the great, in direct proportion, for the heart is nourished according to what it is. If it is small, the bread is small. If it wants much, it will find enough there to fill it and satisfy it.)⁷⁸

Each individual communicant, according to Sapience, is nourished based on the capacity of the heart to receive it. Sapience converts the idea of physical

proportionality—a part cannot exceed its whole—into a metaphysical idea of spiritual proportionality—the eucharistic presence will exist in proportion to the need of the communicant. This assertion shifts attention away from the how of eucharistic presence (“how is Christ present on the altar?”) and refocuses it on the what (“what kind of sacrifice has Christ made for humankind?”). While there may be no proportionality between the material container and the contained, as Aristotle demands, there is proportionality between the gift and the recipient. Sapience points out that the elastic capacity of the Eucharist, a plasticity enabled by Grace Dieu, is its most important and enduring feature. Size and proportionality only matter in defining the intimate relation between the host and the communicant, not in attempting to fathom how Christ is present. This conversion of a physical argument into an affirmation of an immaterial good is characteristic of the conversions that Deguileville will make throughout his poem. While Deguileville acknowledges that there is an order in the visible world—Sapience has after all trained both Nature and Aristotle in her schools—he also asserts that spiritual understanding does not just surpass that which we can learn from our senses, it often contradicts it.

Deguileville’s vision of the Eucharist as well as his portrayal of Aristotle’s limitations were designed to draw his readers’ attention to God’s absolute power, his ability to contravene his own ordained laws. The refocusing on *potentia absoluta* is made clear in the poem even before we meet Aristotle as a character in his own right, when his authority is cited by Grace Dieu as evidence of her sovereignty over Nature. Grace Dieu proposes the following thought experiment to Nature: What would happen to your realm, she asks, if I were to take away the sun for one hundred years? Even Aristotle, “qui fu paiens,” would have to acknowledge that Nature’s power would be annihilated, since he had argued that all generation depends upon the sun.⁷⁹ Claiming Aristotle as her proof that Nature’s autonomy was merely illusory, Grace Dieu imagines the natural world as contingent, completely and directly dependent on God’s unknowable and unpredictable will.⁸⁰ The irony of turning the reigning authority on nature against Nature gives this scene a piquancy characteristic of Deguileville. It goes further than that, however, since Grace Dieu’s comparison of the sun’s generative capacity to divine creative powers was another figure regularly employed by compatibilist writers. In the *Summa contra gentiles*, Aquinas had argued that the creator stands as a cause in relation to his created order much as the sun does to the earth, and that this comparison could demonstrate both the extent of likeness as well as its limitations.⁸¹ For Aquinas, it was completely understandable to imagine divine power as causal in the same way as observable phenomena that he had created. Whereas Aquinas had called on the sun as an emblem for his compatibilist vision, in the 1270s, Aristotle’s views on generation and the sun were denounced for precisely the concerns raised several decades later by Deguileville’s Nature. The anonymous late

thirteenth-century *Errores philosophorum*, a treatise that condemns a list of Aristotle's scientific errors, included the proposition "quod sol semper causabit generationem et corruptionem in istis inferioribus" (that the sun will always cause generation and corruption in this sublunary world).⁸² While this idea may not appear to be palpably theologically dangerous, late medieval orthodox writers objected to it because it assumed perpetual cycles of motion that potentially limited the divine ability to create something out of nothing or to put an end to the cycle. The thought experiment proposed by Deguileville's Grace Dieu is not just an arbitrary natural example; rather, it is an acknowledged example of "bad" Aristotelian science with a scholastic genealogy, a comparison that potentially leads to the heresy of underestimating divine omnipotence. Grace Dieu punctures the balloon of Thomist compatibilism by showing that God can change his mind at any moment; if, at his command, the sun were to cease shining, what power would nature or causal explanations have?

Deguileville calls on Aristotle's authority only in order to show the limited nature of that authority in the face of God's ability to do anything at any time. As Tempier did before him, Deguileville feared the rationalization of nature as a first step toward a rationalization of theology. Whereas thirteenth-century theologians such as Tempier and Bonaventure were concerned that Aristotle's beliefs conflicted with revelation and the Bible, Deguileville seems more concerned about how this pagan physics could potentially unmoor sacramental culture, the foundation of ecclesiastical power. Aristotle's trouncing at the hands of Deguileville's Sapience shows a predominant concern with its institutional dangers over its doctrinal ones.

Ventriloquizing Aristotle ultimately allows Deguileville to show the philosopher's utter redundancy. What Alfred J. Freddoso concludes about Ockham's view of certain aspects of Greek science is also true of Deguileville: "he has no interest at all in repairing the arguments he finds defective or in trying to reveal new intellectual horizons to the nonbelieving philosophers."⁸³ Like his eucharistic piety, Deguileville's tendency to shift the focus from the material to the noumenal realm participates in a strain of fourteenth-century thinking that resisted Aristotle's natural reason even as those Thomist models were being revived and given a more sympathetic academic hearing in the 1320s and 1330s. If thirteenth-century writers had tried to explain the sacraments in terms of physics, an opposing current in early fourteenth-century philosophy—characteristic of Scotus and Ockham—tried to explain physics in terms of the sacraments.⁸⁴ Like these later theologians, Deguileville acknowledges the pervasive influence of Aristotle, quoting the philosopher's authority several times throughout his works, yet the poet does not believe that Greek science can lead to even limited truths that would serve as a preliminary to faith nor can the natural order be understood to stand in even deictic relation to divine providence. Deguileville effectively goes beyond the conflict between Augustinian and

Aristotelian understandings of nature that characterized the end of the thirteenth century. He instead seeks to upend both understandings and to declare the concept of nature itself to be superfluous in the face of God's grace. In such a world, the poet's job was not to represent the world but to represent only the reality beyond it.

Allegory Without Nature

At the beginning of book 3 of the *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*, the pilgrim, having lost his way in a forest, encounters a humpbacked old crone, dressed in rags. She has two stumps along with two hands shaped like griffin claws, and several more holding a variety of tools, including a file, a set of scales, a bowl, and a hook. Yet another hand is hidden behind her back. It is only several pages into this disturbing description of the many-handed crone that we learn her identity (Avarice) and the meaning of her unusual appendages (her two giving hands are amputated, while the rest are used to amass money). It is perhaps with such confounding images in mind that C. S. Lewis dismissed Deguileville's allegorical practice as "an imperfect art" that attempted to impose form on material that was at once "repellent and suffocating."⁸⁵

A more sympathetic critical response to this mode of allegory, with its penchant for *amplificatio* and a sometimes grotesquely concrete iconography, can be traced to the work of Rosemond Tuve. Tuve believes that these vivid but inscrutable images provoked a frisson of allegorical pleasure in readers who "enjoy recognizing and realizing what they have long known" as compared with merely "taking in information or receiving instruction."⁸⁶ On this view, seeming digressions such as the encounter between Sapience and Aristotle were in fact essential to Deguileville's sacramental allegory as they demonstrate "another marked pleasure of allegorical reading: the neatness of arguments that seem merely dramatically appropriate, and turn out upon reflection to be able to carry the weight of some doctrinally important point."⁸⁷ Similarly, Nicolette Zeeman contends that the difficulty of Deguileville's allegory, the incongruity between image and meaning, produces a "desire for exegesis," one that the poem takes pleasure in satisfying, usually at great length.⁸⁸ This auto-exegetical bent has been explored by Stephanie Kamath and Philippe Maupeu, who, separately and importantly, emphasize that Deguileville's poem insistently teaches us how to read its own personifications through its narrating "I."⁸⁹ For Sarah Kay, the allegorical framework is less about an individual autobiographical subject than it is about depicting the ineffable nature of self-knowledge more generally. Kay argues that the symbolic geography of Deguileville's poem allows the poet to explore the problem of self-awareness by mapping the psychological onto the physical. No mere psychomachia, however, "the

power of the poem's personifications is less that they externalize what is 'inside' than that they render palpable the problem of an internal split whose nature is uncertain and shifting."⁹⁰

My reading similarly emphasizes the allegory's phenomenological dimension, arguing that, for Deguileville, a central problem of allegory was how to license a symbolic poetry that took for granted the incommensurate distance between material world and immaterial truths. While it is true that the *Pèlerinage*, like most medieval religious allegories, thematizes "an intense religiosity coupled with a sense of how difficult it is to access the divine from a complexly material and embodied world," in Zeeman's words, it is pointedly the case that the mechanics of Deguileville's personification allegory suggest a more pessimistic view of this epistemological endeavor than many of his contemporary vernacular poets.⁹¹ This pessimism is in part the result of his disdain for the more usual medieval approaches to allegory that called on Nature's creative powers to authorize poetic making. Alan of Lille had famously depicted both Nature and Genius, reed pens in hand, copying their earthly works from the divine template. The poet, in turn, transcribes these mythographic lessons for an earthly audience.⁹² In this mimetic model, art is licensed by nature, however imperfectly. Sylvia Huot rightly observes that Nature cannot be a prototype for Deguileville, because her creative powers are in no way comparable to divine ones: for the Cistercian poet, "the only true artist, in fact, is God."⁹³ Deguileville's allegorical practice disdains to show us the world we know on Nature's robe and instead offers us what we do not immediately know: fantastically drawn, symbolically rich grotesques such as Avarice, images that challenge us to make sense of their chimerical design with our inner, rather than outer, senses.

Just as Deguileville rejects the imitation of nature as an aesthetic strategy, so too he rejects the common mode of analogizing earthly and spiritual entities found in medieval popular poetry. As we have seen, Grace Dieu objects not only that Nature has misunderstood the ax analogy, but also that her own divinity surpasses comparison with earthly analogues ("A moi comparer ne doit on / Nul charpentier ne nul charon," ll. 1955–56). The analogy of the artisan deity had been embraced by both transcendent, cosmographical writers as well as by later immanent, Aristotelian ones. In the twelfth century, Alan of Lille envisions God as the "universalis artifex," the Neoplatonic master craftsman, whose divine blueprint is executed here on earth through the power of his deputy Nature.⁹⁴ In the thirteenth century, Aquinas adopts this figure to express his understanding of the teleological bonds that link the Creator to his creation: "God is the cause of things by his intellect and will, just as the craftsman is cause of the things made by his craft."⁹⁵ Deguileville rejects both of these metaphoric understandings, because God's grace is beyond compare, beyond human analogy.

If God can no longer be imagined as the cosmic craftsman, neither can

Nature remain mistress of his divine mint. Deguileville cannot claim that nature underwrites his poetic practice, since he has portrayed her as a badtempered literalist whose demands for autonomy conflict with, rather than support, a providential understanding of the world. Reduced to the mere mechanical laws of change and renewal, Nature can have no purchase on human morality nor can she serve as an exemplar for representational practice. Having rejected both imitation of and comparison with nature as modes of authorizing his poetry, Deguileville is left with a problem that is at once moral and aesthetic: What licenses the poet's authority in a world where neither mimesis nor natural analogy can serve to buttress poetry's ethical claims? Moreover, what guards against the charge that a fictional integument comes dangerously close to lying? In seeking a metaphysical poetry that did not depend on physical knowledge, Deguileville had to educate his reader in his particular theological hermeneutics. That reader, like Nature, must first be taught the limits of natural allegory and then reeducated in the decorum of figuration and interpretive practice.

One of the poem's most explicit statements of its auto-exegetical practice is offered near its end, as the narrator-pilgrim lies on his deathbed. Significantly, the vehicle for this education is again Aristotle, whose authority on physical matters is invoked only to be subsumed into the author's own poetic authority. Misericorde appears at the narrator's bedside, offering him the milk of pity from her breast. Once she has announced the allegorical tenor of the milk, Misericorde continues:

Aristote si dit que lait
N'est nulle autre chose que sanc
Qui est mue et tout fait blanc
Par decoction de chaleur
Qui li anulle sa rougeur.
Se tu ne scez que ce veut dire,
Tu doiz savoir que hons plain d'ire
N'a point en soi que rouge sanc
Le quel ja mais ne seroit blanc,
Se Charite ne le cuisoit
Et en blancheur ne le muoit.
Laict blanc devient, quant il est cuit
Et al rougeur toute s'en fuit,
Et lors celi qui a tel lait
Pardonne tout ce que meffait
On li a.

(Aristotle says that milk is nothing but blood that is changed and made white by the decoction of heat, which takes away its redness. If you do not know what that means, you should know that a person filled with anger has only red blood,

which would never be white if Charity did not heat it up and turn it white. It becomes white milk when it is heated up and all the redness disappears, and then those who have this milk pardon all who have offended them.)⁹⁶

In his *De generatione animalium* 4.8, Aristotle explains the process whereby blood is concocted into milk in the mother's body.⁹⁷ Misericorde converts the proverbial "milk of charity" into its physical analogue only to reconvert it into a metaphysical key that leaves behind the material substance. She invokes natural knowledge only to declare it unnecessary for the attainment of real, allegorical knowledge ("if you do not know what this means ..."). What initially looks like it will be an analogy gets arrested in mid-comparison.

In this encounter, Deguileville points out that, while the sensible world is filled with things that look like apt analogies for spiritual processes, there are significant limitations to making such comparisons. The exact nature of these limitations is made clear as Misericorde's speech continues, and the milk of pity gets converted into yet another fluid: the blood that flows from Christ's wounded side. Misericorde points out that, as a sign of Christ's sacrifice, this blood/milk is beyond compare with its human analogues. Spiritual blood surpasses regular blood and milk because

Charite l'a mue et cuit
En blanc lait pour commun profit.
Onques tel lait nul ne sucça
Ne tel mammelle n'aleta.

(Charity has taken [the blood of anger] away and heated it up into white milk [i.e., pity] for the common good. No one was ever nursed on milk like this and no breast like this ever gave milk.)⁹⁸

Throughout this passage, Deguileville repeatedly points to the incommensurability of actual milk with its spiritual prototype. This radical disjunction suggests that Aristotelian knowledge of the sensible world is invoked only to be annihilated by allegorical plenitude. This mention of Christ's blood is not characteristic of the "blood piety" described by Caroline Walker Bynum, the affective veneration of droplets and wounds that would later emerge in northern Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁹⁹ Instead, it is an intellectualizing of this blood that directs our attention not to the wounded body of Christ but to the epistemological position of the allegorical signifier.

Deguileville's practice invokes the horizon of expectation common to the late medieval fourfold exegetical model of interpretation, even as it departs from it in significant ways. This fourfold theory was applied to both

scriptural and vernacular literature, this latter usage famously described in the *Letter to Con Grande* attributed to Dante.¹⁰⁰ Such models depended on an analogy between natural phenomena, which were understood to have material, formal, efficient, and final causes, and a polysemous mode of interpretation, which encompassed the span of literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical (or eschatological) meanings, a mode in which each layer of understanding, beginning with the literal referent, could be found to inhere in the others.¹⁰¹ While this exegetical criticism does not map evenly against its Aristotelian prototype, it similarly valued natural knowledge as an avenue toward understanding God through analogy with sensory cognition, and successive layers of meaning were imagined as immanent within one another.¹⁰² Using Deguileville's terms, we would expect the following hermeneutic chain: the literal sign (blood converted into milk) is allegorized as the milk of pity. The moral significance of this milk is shown to be Christ's blood and the potential for forgiveness that it emblemizes. Eschatologically, this symbolizes the salvation of the soul through Christ's incomprehensible sacrifice. Yet Deguileville disconnects the literal from the allegorical by declaring the sensible analogue to be unnecessary for understanding the rest of the chain. Misericorde's interpretive progression is also important here: she begins, not with the literal signifier (blood) but with the signified concept (pity). Figuration works neither through imitation (i.e., actual blood and milk are just fallen copies of Christ's blood) nor by direct analogy (i.e., actual blood : actual milk :: Christ's blood : pity). Significantly, there is imitation here, but it exists only within the symbolic realm. The allegorical Pity reminds us that she nurses those who have suffered, "et ainsi resemble a mon pere, / Et ensui Charite ma mere" (And so I am like my father [i.e., Christ] and I follow my mother Charity).¹⁰³ There is no mimetic relation between material and immaterial realms; instead, moral virtues imitate and participate in divine prototypes, and useful analogic relations remain confined to the spiritual sphere. For Deguileville, natural philosophical knowledge leads neither to metaphysical understanding nor does it reflect, however dimly, a spiritual sign; instead, the passage repeatedly draws our attention both to an ontological rupture (physical referents are not substantively related to metaphysical counterparts) and to the epistemological consequences of this break: knowledge of nature, in either its mimetic or teleological forms, is ultimately irrelevant, because such knowledge does not help us to understand that which is beyond earthly comprehension, that is, Christ's sacrifice.

In seeking to understand Deguileville's hermeneutic practice, one that differs in important respects from some other common late medieval hermeneutic schemes, we might be tempted to ascribe to him a more straightforwardly Augustinian theory of how natural allegory works. Deguileville's sympathy with an Augustinian theological vision is undeniable. At the outset of the *Pèlerinage*, the dreamer sees the allegorical

Jerusalem, well guarded and seemingly impregnable. High on its ramparts, the figure of Augustine in the guise of a “oiseleur / Ou d’oiseles apasteleur” (a fowler or a bird-keeper) scatters “bird seed”—his good words—on the pilgrims below who seek admittance, a gift that allows them to construct wings with which they fly easily over the battlements and into the heavenly city.¹⁰⁴ This is an arresting image, and one that anticipates the Augustinian theological commitments that will become clear as the allegorical trilogy progresses: his prioritization of a fall-redemption theology, his advocacy for the absolute freedom of the will (both human and divine), and his understanding of human knowledge acquisition as an illuminative process. However, on the subject of nature, Deguileville’s views cannot be termed strictly Augustinian. Augustine embraced a transcendent semiotics of nature, asserting that exegetes need only enough natural knowledge so as to be able to explain biblical descriptions. While this knowledge was not to be pursued as an end in itself, it did have a clear instrumental value. “We should use this world and not enjoy it,” Augustine writes in *On Christian Doctrine*, “so that ... by means of corporeal and temporal things we may comprehend the eternal and spiritual.”¹⁰⁵ Thus Matthew 10:16, where we are admonished to follow the wisdom of the serpent, is understandable if, according to Augustine, we know that a snake sheds its skin by working its way through a narrow hole; so too the wise man sheds his old self in order to acquire a new identity in the church.¹⁰⁶ Augustine’s view might be described as indexical: the natural world points to spiritual things in an abstract way.

If Deguileville’s hermeneutic practice can be considered Augustinian, it would be a dark Augustinianism, one that did not even hold to this indexical relation between material signifiers and their spiritual referents. Deguileville’s *Misericorde* claims that knowledge of actual blood is superfluous when it comes to understanding either the milk of pity or its soteriological analogue, Christ’s blood. For Deguileville, the material vehicle of a natural metaphor can be safely discarded altogether. The Augustinian view, by contrast, had seen nature as a complex semiotics: it included material tracks that allowed the ethical interpreter to perceive, however faintly, the divine design behind the corruptible physical landscape, a mimetic relation famously embodied in Alan of Lille’s formulation that the created world was a book in which we humans, seeing ourselves, also glimpse the architecture of a distant, unchanging reality.¹⁰⁷ By the end of the thirteenth century, Bonaventure cautioned that this Book of Nature was to be read only by theologians, not by mere natural philosophers.¹⁰⁸ Taking an even more radical view, Deguileville suggests that this book might not be worth reading at all.

Deguileville eschews the progression from visible sign to invisible truth that we find, in different ways, in Neoplatonic mimesis, fourfold exegetical hermeneutics, and, in a much attenuated form, in Augustinian semiotics.

Instead, Deguileville's interpretive practice is more like a closed circuit, wherein the production of meaning resides only within the symbolic realm. The physical process neither leads you to, nor reliably points you toward, its spiritual type. Deguileville's rhetorical strategy might thus best be described as "antitypological," since knowledge of the material sign cannot aid our understanding of the immaterial sign (redemptive sacrifice). A knowledge of God based on physical knowledge lacks sufficient explanatory power, because it cannot explain the abstract and indeterminate aspects of grace that are seemingly infinite. What is so radical about Deguileville's view is that, for him, the finitude of earthly knowledge means that the natural world is only significant to the extent that it can provide a contrast to spiritual knowledge. Natural knowledge cannot be the handmaiden of scripture, just as Nature herself can no longer be the handmaiden of God, having been replaced in this role by Deguileville's Penance.

Having dispensed with the formal strategies of mimesis and immanence—strategies whereby the poet models his authority on that of nature's own creative processes—Deguileville must attempt something more radical: the poet must himself assume the authority formerly held by Nature. In order to do so, he must first show that sensory cognition of the natural world is not only faulty but morally worthless and then replace it with an alternative hermeneutic, a vatic pedagogy that allows the poet to assume the mediatory role formerly occupied by Nature herself.

Before beginning this education, the body must be disabled as not only a site of cognition but also a site of human identity. The poem does so by repeatedly insisting on the unreliability of the senses, the carcerality of the body, and the soul's estrangement from the physical world. The poet likens the five senses to five gates whereby "entre souvent ordure assez" (much filth often enters).¹⁰⁹ They are particularly pernicious, insofar as they can potentially deceive the Christian regarding the true nature of the Eucharist, which looks, tastes, and feels like bread, but is in reality Christ.¹¹⁰ Beware of your body, Raison warns the narrator, for it is your enemy. Never to be trusted, the physical body is

un tas de pourreture,
Un simulacre fait d'ordure
Une estatue de limon,
Un espouentail a couloun.
Par li ne se puet remuer
Ne rien faire ne labourer,
Quar impotent est et contrait,
Sourt, avugle et contrefait.

(A pile of corruption, an image made of dung, a statue made of mud, a scare-crow. By himself, he cannot do anything, cannot move or work, for he is powerless and crippled, deaf,

Nature alone is responsible for this creation, according to Raison, while the soul comes from God and is ministered to by Grace Dieu (ll. 5969–84). Given the fallibility of the physical form, the humanity of the person lies solely in the soul. The body is merely a transitory husk that houses an immortal kernel, two entities cohabitating but lacking an inherent connection.

What is implicit in the earlier debate between Nature and Grace Dieu as well as that between Sapience and Aristotle becomes explicit in the poem's insistence that the soul is alienated from the body that houses it. The dreamnarrator must separate from his body, give up his physical vision, in order to have moral vision. The separable nature of body and soul becomes clear in an episode of the *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*, where the pilgrim asks Raison about the correct relation of the two, questioning whether the human is one thing or two. Does the human lie in the soul or in a combination of the soul and body? Raison answers emphatically that true personhood resides in the soul alone, since only the soul bears the image of God. Raison's words to the dreamer emphasize this indelible division:

Ains toi et ton cors estes ·II·,
 Quar ·II· vouldoirs ne sunt pas d'un,
 Ainz sont de ·II·, ce set chascun

(So you and your body are two, since two wills do not issue
 from one entity, but from two, as everyone knows.)¹¹²

The poet is allowed to vacate his body in order to gain the supramundane perspective of the soul. His own experience then confirms Raison's assertion. When the pilgrim is forced to rejoin his body, he laments having to reclothe himself in it.¹¹³ This dualist vision of body and soul is set up in opposition to the predominant scholastic Aristotelian view of the soul as the substantial form of the material body—a view that underscores the mutual predisposition of the two. The Thomist version of this relation emphasizes how the two cannot be fully picked apart without changing the nature of both. A man cannot be merely a mind without a body, according to Aquinas, since “it is one and the same man who is conscious both that he understands and that he senses. But one cannot sense without a body, and therefore the body must be some part of man.”¹¹⁴ While it is by now clear that Deguileville can in no way be considered a Thomist on the soul, neither can he be considered precisely Augustinian. While the Neo-Augustinian model emphasized the spiritual nature of the soul's substance and its separability from the body, it also ultimately argued that the two remained connected in formal ways. Even writers such as Peter John Olivi who voiced skepticism about a strictly Aristotelian model of the soul as the substantial form of the body remain committed to the ultimate unity of body and soul.¹¹⁵

In her reading of this passage, Sarah Kay rightfully cautions that Deguileville is not a Cartesian *avant la lettre*.¹¹⁶ While this caveat is salutary as medieval modes of dualism do not map neatly onto their Enlightenment successors, Deguileville's repeated insistence on the division between soul and body is notably radical, even among late medieval Augustinian writers and particularly so within a late medieval piety whose hallmark was an affective, incarnational theology (as the work of Caroline Bynum and many others has made clear). While it is beyond the scope of my present argument to give a full account of Deguileville's view of body-soul relations, it is important to observe that his dualist ontology rejects not just Aristotelian hylomorphism, but also the common Neoplatonic trope of the body as the microcosm of the universe. His view takes aim at the kind of analogous thinking found in Alan of Lille's *De planctu naturae*, where Nature claims that "humani corporis forma mundi furatur effigiem" (the form of the human body bears a hidden resemblance to the universe), as well as in Jean's *Rose*, whose Nature calls man "uns petiz monde noveaus."¹¹⁷ Deguileville specifically invokes the telescoping microcosmic model only to cashier it, when Raison tells that dreamer that his true nature cannot be compared to the heavens, the earth, the sea, birds, or any other creatures except angels.¹¹⁸ In rehearsing these differences, it becomes clear that Deguileville was both a sensitive reader of these competing models of the soul/body relation and that he was intent on distinguishing his own viewpoint from them. Like Grace Dieu schooling Nature in the limits of the artisan and ax analogies, like Misericorde showing the narrator that knowledge of actual milk does not help us to understand the milk of pity, Deguileville wants his reader to acknowledge that, epistemologically speaking, you cannot get to a spiritual "there" from an earthly "here" except through grace alone.

I point to Deguileville's dualist tendencies, not to accuse him of being a recusant Manichaean or a proleptic Cartesian, but to note that his embrace of substance dualism ("toi et ton cors estes ·II·") makes possible a poetics wherein the poet acts as a channel between the embodied world and its spiritual reality. If the material world cannot, in any meaningful way, serve as a guarantor for the ethical truths of poetry, it is the poet himself who must now show what connects the two. Only then can he assume the magisterial role formerly accorded to Lady Nature herself, and in doing so, serve as the mediator between God's creative vision and his creation. If reality does not inhere in the things we see around us, then it can exist only in the incremental education of the soul, the didactic allegorical quest orchestrated by the poet. This education is scripted in a particularly catechistic way: the dreamer-pilgrim encounters allegorical figures whom he does not usually recognize; he questions them and they teach him, only belatedly coming to realize that he has failed to act or been incapable of acting earlier. Tuve comments that this drama of delayed recognition is an essential part of medieval allegorical pleasure, at a certain point "identities

and realities sometimes seem to dawn upon us like suns and then shine out.”¹¹⁹ It should also be remarked that this process shows knowledge production to be deeply retrospective and independent of sense perception. What our eyes see is never sufficient in this world, and the poet almost always initially misunderstands what he sees. The serial description of the encyclopedia (reading the surfaces of things) is replaced with the seriality of the pilgrim education, a process that finds truth in allegorical encounters that can only be understood with the inner rather than the outer senses.¹²⁰ These encounters usually demand a mediator such as Grace Dieu or Raison to interpret what the dreamer sees. Instead of giving an authoritative voice to Nature, Deguileville’s allegory devoices her in order to privilege these other allegorical intermediaries who function as alter egos of the poet himself. In this way, the *Pèlerinage* becomes an allegorical echo chamber, but one wherein Nature’s shrill voice is effectively silenced.

This is an exquisitely ambitious poetic project. It substitutes what we might call an apophysis of analogy, an extreme version of the transcendent indescribability topos explored in the first chapter, for natural modes of analogy. It bases its aesthetic foundations on its ontological premises. Just as it is only God’s grace that mediates between material and immaterial, doing so in a radically contingent and unknowable way, so too the allegorical semiotics of the *Pèlerinage* are shown to be similarly contingent: it is not copying (natural mimesis) or causes (encyclopedic universality) or even indexicality (a semiotics of nature) that license poetry, rather it is only the moral vision of the poet that links allegorical practice to spiritual truth.

In this world, the poet’s ventriloquism of Grace Dieu, rather than Nature, becomes the ethical center of the poem. The conversation between Grace Dieu and the pilgrim-narrator models an authoritative, exemplary encounter that is reproduced between text and audience. The devout reader or listener can comfortably occupy the position of the pilgrim in a way that Jean de Meun’s audience, for instance, could not occupy the role of the lover-narrator in the *Rose*. While both poems embrace didacticism, Deguileville’s offers a performative allegory that allows the audience to learn along with the narrator. In order to accept Grace Dieu’s lesson, the pilgrim-narrator must leave Nature, and natural philosophy, behind. In order to justify allegory as didactic exemplar, Deguileville has to debase the encyclopedic seriality of Nature’s description of her domains. The law-driven cycle of seasonal regeneration she describes is shown to be a Rube Goldberg-esque *machina* without the illuminating inner spirit of *Deus* provided by Grace Dieu. Instead, the poem prefers to have allegory without nature, a personification that does not need to be authorized by material signs. This practice of allegory is antithetical to that of Aquinas, who believed that sacred allegory was authorized by the continuum between the material and immaterial worlds, the human senses leading to truths of a spiritual order.¹²¹ This practice also differs substantively from the legitimating power of the

transcendent version of the Book of Nature metaphor characteristic of twelfth-century writers such as Hugh of St. Victor, who imagined an abstract semiotics that allowed nature to point toward higher truth, even if it could not carry us the whole way to it. In Deguileville, nature loses even this indexical function. Instead, didactic figural language is shown to possess a power independent of the natural order. In this way, Deguileville's allegory attempts to sever the link between ethics and physics that was characteristic of the medieval arts curriculum as well as the thesis explored at such length in works such as Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Rose*. The broader claim at work in the *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* is that the human moral sphere is independent of the material world around it. In its unstinting allegorical "ultrarealism"—the idea that truth resides only in the universal, never in an individual object or utterance—Guillaume de Deguileville's vision of nature is perhaps the most radical of all the late medieval poetic accounts considered in this book. This poetic vision was an intervention simultaneously into academic debates about how nature could potentially signify and within the poetic tradition of personifying Lady Nature; moreover, it anticipates the central role that nature was to play in continuing debate over Jean de Meun's legacy that marked the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

The Return of Nature in the *Querelle de la Rose*

In the earlier 1331 recension of the *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*, the lines of affiliation that linked it to the *Roman de la Rose* are made clear at the outset: the poet, having reading the *Rose* before falling asleep, claims that his own dream was unquestionably influenced by his bedtime reading. As critics have long noted, these lines are removed in the second recension; a later passage has Venus claim the *Rose* as her own work, effectively damning the earlier poem with faint praise issuing from the mouth of a character who symbolizes only destructive carnality in Deguileville's poem.¹²² Yet even in the first recension, Deguileville was intent on clearly distinguishing both his philosophical and aesthetic visions from that of his poetic predecessor, an intention that anticipates later critical responses to Jean's conception of Nature.

While these later critics were concerned with many of the same issues that preoccupied Deguileville—the problem of natural necessity, the ethical claims of integumental allegory—Deguileville's Nature was not a model that was taken up with great enthusiasm by the writers who responded to Jean's provoking poem later in the century. The notorious *querelle de la Rose* pitted those who would archly or earnestly defend Jean de Meun, including the royal secretary and provost of Lille Jean de Montreuil, against those who posthumously condemned the poet for antifeminism and even heresy, most

notably, the poet and polemicist Christine de Pisan and Jean Gerson, theologian, chancellor of the University of Paris, and one of the *Rose*'s harshest critics.¹²³ As Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski has argued, this debate was in part about whether vernacular literature had a moral obligation to edify its readers.¹²⁴

In arguing decisively that poetry had just such an obligation and that Jean's poem had failed to meet it, Jean Gerson resurrects a personified Nature to testify against his predecessor's views on how natural law applies to the human world. Written in 1402, Gerson's "Traictie d'une vision faite contre Le Ronmant de la rose" (Treatise against the Roman de la Rose), is a prose vision that recounts a complaint lodged by Chastity before the court of Lady Justice against the excesses of a certain Fol Amoureux (Foolish Lover). She outlines several erroneous beliefs promoted by Fol Amoureux that she wishes to see condemned, including indiscreet speech that mixes spiritual and carnal topics; the disparagement of chastity and virginity; and, most worryingly, the promotion of extramarital sex. It becomes clear that Chastity, like many others in Gerson's early fifteenth-century Paris, had recently been reading the *Roman de la Rose*, since her list of accusations reads, in effect, like a plot summary of the poem's second half, and the Fol Amoureux is soon shown to be no less a personage than the *Rose*'s clerical continuator, Jean de Meun. Gerson reanimates Nature to take the stand against Jean, who has misrepresented her, at least according to Gerson.¹²⁵

Gerson's treatise is not just a belated skirmish in a literary war of reputation, however. It is yet a further episode in the ongoing university debate over the extent to which Nature can license human moral behavior, and, if so, what form of moral suasion she might assert. In introducing the character of Eloquence Theologienne (Theological Eloquence) as Chastity's champion, Gerson tips his hand to the continuing academic repercussions of the debate occasioned by Jean's poem, a debate that had, as discussed in the preceding chapter, its root in scholastic arguments over the extent to which natural inclination is believed to influence humans. Gerson's Eloquence Theologienne addresses the now deceased Fol Amoureux and his living supporters, warning against the poem's continuing corrupting influence on the morals of its readers. According to him, no rationale exists for defending the poem, neither the naïveté of the writer nor the idea that it is licensed by a well-hidden integumental allegory.

Gerson, like Deguileville before him, takes particular aim at Jean's concept of necessity, arguing that one cannot appeal to the law of necessity in the case of the human: "Necessité n'a loy. Diex! Quelle doctrine—non pas doctrine, mais blaspheme et heresie!" (Necessity has no law. Oh God! What a doctrine ... not a doctrine but blasphemy and heresy!).¹²⁶ When Chastity's defender exclaims against this adage, his outrage is directed against the rationalization of natural necessity associated with Genius in Jean de Meun's poem. Like Tempier and his orthodox colleagues more than a century before,

Eloquence Theologienne declares the idea of natural necessity operating in the human realm blasphemous, claiming that such a belief is both “faulce doctrine et contre experience” (wrong doctrine and against experience).¹²⁷

Gerson and Deguileville both share a horror of the natural determinism to which Jean’s poem gave voice (even if it was a model that the earlier poet himself did not ultimately embrace). Yet Gerson decides, unlike Deguileville, that Nature herself remains a viable moral agent. Gerson may not have followed Deguileville’s lead in part because he was still concerned with addressing arguments around necessity that involved the human will, a problem to which Deguileville’s Nature did not offer a nuanced solution. In the *Roman de la Rose*, all necessity is lifted from the human world except, in Genius’s account, the necessity of procreation. Humans have absolute freedom of will with the major caveat that they must reproduce at any cost; in this way, Jean de Meun portrays the conflict between natural inclination and human morality as inevitable; the two are sometimes felicitous (in marriage), sometimes unhappy (extramarital) collaborators. If Jean de Meun’s Nature had argued against natural necessity in all its forms, from astrodeterminism to milder versions of human inclination, Deguileville’s Nature embodies precisely these types of regularity. In demoting Nature to mere rote cyclical change, Deguileville shifts all autonomy and freedom back to the side of the human and the divine. For Deguileville, as we have seen, Nature is separate from the human, symbolizing the fallenness of the human intellect when confronted with the essential alterity and unknowability of the divine plan. Unlike Deguileville who declares Nature’s powers to be moot, Gerson recognizes Nature’s problematic relation to the human: one cannot simply draw a line between nature and humanity and insist that each stay on its own appointed side. Moreover, Gerson wishes to resurrect Nature as the moral arbiter who tells humans how to use their will correctly; in order to do so, he returns to an even earlier model, that of Alan of Lille.

Gerson claims that Jean’s Nature has corrupted not just the ethical claims of the natural order but also the literary exemplar of these claims. Objecting to the carnality promoted by both Nature and Genius, Gerson decries their illicit collaboration as evidence of how Jean’s continuation “fut corrupmeent estraitte du grant Alain en son livre qui’il fait De la plainte Nature” (was taken corruptly from the great Alan’s book *De planctu naturae*).¹²⁸ It is an outrage that the *Rose* has so grotesquely twisted the message of marital sexuality found in its source. The problem of Jean’s misrepresentation of Nature and her moral authority is addressed through the now familiar rhetorical technique of ventriloquism:

Je respons pour vous, dame Nature, que onques vous ne
concillastes pechié, onques ne vouldistes que persone fist
contre aucuns des dis commandemens (lesquelx nous
appellons vos commandemens) les commandemens de Nature;

dire le contraire seroit erreur en la foy (c'est assavoir dire que selonc droit de nature euvre naturelle d'omme et de fame ne fust pechié hors mariaige).

(I answer in your stead, Lady Nature, that you at no time intended to recommend sin, that you at no time wished anyone to act against the Ten Commandments [which we call your commandments], Nature's commandments. To speak to the contrary would be an error in faith—that is to say that according to Nature's law the natural activity between a man and a woman was not a sin outside of marriage.)¹²⁹

In impersonating Nature, Gerson chooses to combat the morally necrotizing effects of Jean's poem by rehabilitating the allegorical figures that his poem has ostensibly contaminated. In her voice, Gerson argues that marriage is a natural imperative rather than merely a human construct. In answering for Nature, Gerson conflates natural and scriptural law and, through them, shows that natural influence can have potentially beneficial effects on the motions of the human will.

It was precisely this conflation—the overlap of natural law and divine law suggested by Isidore of Seville's etymology—that Deguileville sought to unknot in his representation of Nature. For Deguileville, there was no mimetic mechanism that allowed Nature to copy God in an unproblematic way. This relentlessly fallen version of Nature is not appealing to Gerson, because the later writer wants to maintain Nature's exemplarity even as he admits the dangers of allowing natural necessity significant sway in the sphere of the human. Ultimately Gerson leapfrogs over both Deguileville and Jean, returning nostalgically to Alan's Nature as a goddess of the sexually normative. In the figure of Eloquence Theologienne, Gerson alleges that Nature authorizes both human reason and human sexual mores, a position skeptically questioned by Jean de Meun and refuted altogether by Deguileville.

Gerson's views on Jean's Nature did not go unanswered for long. In his prompt response to Gerson's "Traictie," Pierre Col, a canon at the University of Paris and a royal secretary, explicitly defends Jean's explorations of natural necessity in the human world, arguing that the poet's personifications of Nature and Genius, far from encouraging foolish love, encourage people to practice licit love, "les oeuvres de Nature." Such "works of Nature" are intended to propagate the species and to prevent unnatural acts ("pour continuer l'espece humaine et pour delaissier l'euvre contraire a nature").¹³⁰ Like Gerson, Col returns to Alan of Lille's definition of Nature as a moral governor whose role was to prevent irregular sexual acts. By contrast, Gerson, seeking to return to an unproblematic alignment of natural and human worlds, goes beyond Alan to argue that Nature is the ideological guarantor of chastity rather than just married love. In this continuing

debate, we see the range of roles that Nature was asked to fill: she could be tasked with regulating human sexual behavior (Alan of Lille, Gerson, Col), with acting as theological spokesperson for the contingent freedom of the human will (the thing that separates man from nature in Jean de Meun), or even with remaining silent on both theology and human behavior (Deguileville).

* * *

Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* thus witnesses the longevity of the arguments over nature that took their particular form in late thirteenth-century scholastic circles, a framework translated into popular poetry by Jean de Meun. These arguments continued to influence vernacular poetry and academic circles well into the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, though each iteration bears the marks of its own local philosophical and aesthetic pressures. We see this tendency in Deguileville's response to Jean, which offers a dramatically different answer to the problem of how to represent nature. In pitting Nature against Grace Dieu, Deguileville tries to separate earthly things from ethical values, values that the poet was ideally positioned to champion. Since the human will (like its divine prototype) is spiritual and the physical merely carceral, morality and the sacramental culture on which it is based could have no grounding in the material world. In affirming the *vanitas* of Nature and her clerk Aristotle, Deguileville rejects the poetic and philosophical thought experiment of his predecessor Jean de Meun. Deguileville resisted Jean's vision of nature on the battleground of allegory itself, refashioning it to suit not just the differing generic demands of a religious pilgrimage but also the changing philosophical concerns of the following century. Unlike later critics of the *Rose* such as Gerson, however, Deguileville was not content merely to return to Alan of Lille's cosmological vision that made natural necessity an alibi for human mores (Nature tells us that chastity is a virtue). Instead, Deguileville argues that natural necessity is superfluous in relation to both theological necessity and an orthodox sacramental vision. Grace Dieu does not need to collaborate with Nature, because, in Deguileville, the ways of nature and the ways of grace are estranged. Nature's voice is effectively silenced, decoupled from an earlier thirteenth-century ecclesiastical authority that sought to control and redirect it.

Nature's silence was not to last indefinitely, however. Despite the misgivings of writers such as Deguileville, the *Roman de la Rose* continued to set the philosophical agenda for the late medieval dream vision. The contrasting images of allegorized Nature found in Alan of Lille, Jean de Meun, and Guillaume de Deguileville were a legacy passed down to later vernacular poets as well as to the public intellectuals who argued about its meaning. Like the *De planctu naturae* and the *Rose*, Deguileville's religious trilogy was to be highly influential in England from the 1360s onward. The

conflicting hermeneutic positions offered by these works had to be processed by the later medieval poets who sought to refashion the classical dream vision into a laboratory for exploring the natural world, an exploration that could take place without the poet ever having to leave his library.

It was the legacy of these philosophical and poetic arguments with which Chaucer would wrestle when he chose to translate the *Roman de la Rose*, a translation that would suggest the formal dream vision frame as the most appropriate place to discuss a set of enduring questions about the extent to which moral authority necessarily inheres in the natural world. But Chaucer also knew and translated Deguileville's work. When it came time for Chaucer himself to allegorize Lady Nature, as he does in both the *Parliament of Fowls* and the *Canterbury Tales*, he would have to navigate his way through these conflicting literary models as well as an ongoing academic inquest into the viability of nature as a category through which to understand the human. While Chaucer was, as I will argue in the next chapter, influenced by all of these models in different ways and to differing degrees, Deguileville's Nature would have to wait until the fifteenth century to find perhaps its keenest admirer in England, not Chaucer, but the Benedictine monk John Lydgate.

PART III

CHAPTER 5

Rarely read together, these two poems offer complementary visions of how human ethical systems were thought to arise from a natural order imagined, alternately, as mutable or as fixed. The *Parliament of Fowls*, simultaneously a scholastic thought experiment and a lover's dream vision, imagines what would happen if the laws of natural necessity were repealed: What if Nature's order was merely a set of suggested guidelines? The *Physician's Tale* offers an unsettling example of how the privileging of nature over human art in a transcendent order could serve as a rationale for the most inhumane (and potentially unnatural) of behaviors. What is dissected in both poems is the scholastic idea of *inclinatio* as necessity, an idea elaborated in thirteenth-century scholastic discussions of nature and human will, but one that is revisited by Chaucer in light of more recent fourteenth-century developments in the academic debate. In both poems, Chaucer suggests that the problem lies less in the human misuse of free will and more in the contradictions found within a contemporary model of nature that advocates inclination in the natural world but only epiphenomenally in the human. In invoking the terms of a debate inherited from both academic and popular writers, Chaucer's response is at once scientific (what is the place of the human with respect to nature?) and aesthetic (what kind of authority can the poet claim with respect to nature?).

Critics have long recognized Chaucer's interest in free will and necessity in poems such as *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Knight's Tale* among other places, and Chaucer's interest in these questions has most often been framed primarily in relation to Boethius's *Consolatio philosophiae*, a poem that Chaucer translated and one that explores how the "willeful moevynges of the soule" that animate humans differ from the "naturel entencioun of thinges," those inherent inclinations that govern the rest of the rest of the nonhuman world.¹ This chapter argues that Chaucer's interest is evident more widely across his canon than is usually acknowledged and that it is equally the legacy of debates over Aristotelian naturalism that are more historically proximate than Boethius. This is not to deny Chaucer's preoccupation with Boethius but to see these Boethian themes as having been made newly pressing by contemporary fourteenth-century debates over providentialism and natural determinism. This argument reaffirms a significant point made recently by Nicolette Zeeman: that the term "popular poetry" is something of a misnomer given that Chaucer (like Jean de Meun before him and Lydgate after) uses his poetry to challenge the epistemological hierarchies assumed by his scholastic contemporaries.²

Chaucer's interest in the *Parliament of Fowls* and the *Physician's Tale* is less in adjudicating the philosophical argument over where precisely the line of inclination is drawn—a little further toward the human, a little closer to the animal—than it is in exploring the reasons that motivate actors to take different positions on this question. In essence, Chaucer is interested in how and to what ends physics gets psychologized. These poems both ask: what

does one gain either by arguing that he or she is exceptional to the rest of the physical world, or, alternately, by arguing that he or she is largely coextensive with that world?

The answers that Chaucer proposes to these questions distinguish him from his English contemporaries to the extent that they are grounded in an intense engagement with the answers previously given by Latin and vernacular poets. While Boethius and Alan of Lille were recognizable touchstones for Chaucer's views on the ethical possibilities of "kynde," or nature, I will argue that it is what he inherits from his more proximate literary predecessors, Jean de Meun and Guillaume de Deguileville—the idea of personified Nature as a site for discussing the claims of necessity and contingency with regard to the human will—that gives these poems not just a shared vocabulary but a set of conceptual positions to navigate: the politics of the art-nature divide; the relationship between human and divine wills; and what it means to speak in another's voice as both a poet and a philosopher.

Finally, examining these two poems together suggests how "Chaucer's natures" differ from our own, no less polysemous, conceptions of nature. His was a world of inherent dynamism governed by natural motions, a place full of competing agencies that did not belong only or properly to the human. In this world, nature was imagined as inclination and place was both destiny and epistemology. Every inclination had a cause; many of these efficient causes were related to the ends of a particular designated place to which each thing, whether animate or inanimate, "repaired." We know things about other things based on their proper place. The idea of will, however, was purely human and the question of how far such will differentiated us from the rest of the natural world remained an open and contested question throughout the late medieval period. Medieval Aristotelianism celebrated this form of inclination and medieval poets questioned the moral and philosophical complexities that ensued in trying to square inclination with will. Chaucer's formel eagle and the exemplary Virginia both raise the question of how the human and the natural worlds ought ideally to relate to one another. It was not just that the border between the two was more porous then than now, but that human ethics were seen as the result of similar physical inclinations that were known to operate in birds, rocks, and rosebushes, even if such ontological pressures were obscured or disavowed by human actors.

Between "Lyf" and "Craft": The Antipathetic Narrator of the *Parliament of Fowls*

The *Parliament of Fowls* is arguably Chaucer's most conspicuous statement

about the relation between the natural and human worlds. In it, we encounter a typically Chaucerian narrator—that is, a narcoleptic, philophobic bibliophile—who falls asleep while reading the *Somnium Scipionis* (the *Dream of Scipio*), encounters the vatic figure of Scipio Africanus himself, and is given a vision of Nature’s works as a reward for his assiduous reading in old books. After summarizing the *Somnium Scipionis*, both its political message (work for the common good) and its natural philosophical one (the relatively insignificant place of this “lytel erthe” in the cosmos), the narrator is given entrée into a walled garden filled with birds seeking mates. After much debate, Lady Nature allows the most beautiful of her creations, a highborn formel eagle, to postpone her choice for a year, despite being wooed by three suitable eagle lovers. Once Nature pronounces her sentence, the other birds quickly choose mates and sing a roundel celebrating the arrival of spring.

Like many of Chaucer’s dream visions, the *Parliament of Fowls* is intended to be read simultaneously for its humor and for its philosophical message. While some critics have suggested that we cannot attribute a serious purpose to such a comic poem, medieval readers would not necessarily have shared (or even understood) a demand for generic purity in literature, the sequestering of laughter from intellectual ambition. Such a mixture of high and low, comedy and philosophy, sacred and profane, would not be unfamiliar to a medieval audience accustomed to viewing psalters whose margins were filled with priapic peasants and bawdy animal grotesques. It is this quintessentially medieval hybrid form that allows Chaucer to test out a serious thesis about what humans expect from nature in a world of squawking, squabbling birds.

Despite a carefully rendered allegorical garden setting of trees, flowers, and talking animals, nature in the *Parliament of Fowls* is, as Sarah Stanbury observes, not about things “out there,” but rather about a force “in here.”³ Nature’s authority is discussed here, as it is in much of Middle English literature under the rubric of “kynde,” that force that impels creatures to desire what they ought to desire and to conform to expected behaviors. In the words of *Piers Plowman*’s Imaginatyf, it is Kynde who taught

þe tortle to trede, the pocok to cauke,
And Adam and Eue and alle othere bestes
A cantel [portion] of kynde wyt here kynde to saue.⁴

For Chaucer, as for Langland, “kynde” explains why natural creatures, including humans, do what they usually do: exist, eat, breathe, reproduce. A reproductive governess for her creatures, Chaucer’s Lady Nature self-consciously evokes the originary point common to most late medieval personifications of her power, Alan of Lille’s *De planctu naturae*:

Right as Aleyn, in the pleynt of Kynde,

Devyseth Nature of aray and face,
In swich aray men myghte hire there fynde.
(*Parliament*, ll. 316–18)

Instead of describing the physical presence of Nature as she appears before him, Chaucer's narrator directs his reader to the authority of an old book, a book quite similar to the one that the narrator himself reads at the beginning of the poem. Alan's *De planctu* included an elaborate blazon of Nature—from her crown set with jewels representing the planets to her gorgeous robe depicting all classes of animals, plants, and humans—a description that doubled as an exemplary allegory of her ideal rule in the sublunary world. Chaucer's narrator conspicuously resists the ekphrastic urge in the case of Nature, an urge he happily indulges elsewhere in his descriptions of Love's garden as well as the figure of Venus, whose *deshabillé* is documented in titillating detail. Chaucer's Nature is, from the moment of her introduction in the *Parliament*, a conspicuously textual topos that points the reader back to a Neoplatonic view of the human's transcendent place in the material environment. This refusal to narrate Nature's appearance, however, also signals another of the poem's primary literary debts, one that, while unacknowledged, is arguably much greater than its debt to Alan: Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*, a work that also personifies Nature with a nod to Alan.⁵ Jean introduces Nature only to lament the impossibility of ever describing her majesty, a lengthy nondescription that unfurls into a meditation on the incapacity of art to ever properly represent nature, and, more specifically, a prologue to an assessment of the poet's own aesthetic limitations.

Previous critics have read Chaucer's interest in "kynde" primarily in relation to his use of Alan and Jean, and his debt to these literary predecessors has been carefully excavated. George Economou sees Chaucer's interpolation of Alan into his narrative as a sign that the later poet seeks to affirm Alan's cosmological vision over and against the more skeptical and instrumental use made of Nature by Jean.⁶ By contrast, David Aers has argued that "far from supporting Alain's metaphysical assumptions Chaucer suggests the absence of any metaphysical and authoritatively transcendental norms which ... could serve as stable guides leading us through a sacramental universe to either the Neoplatonic heaven or its completion and fulfilment in orthodox Christian theology."⁷ The ideological effects of Lady Nature's gendered performance are explored by Lisa Kiser, who believes that what Chaucer's Nature has in common with those of Alan and Jean is a shared desire to encode "his culture's dominant conceptions about the distribution of power in the social order," a power that "is obviously not vested in women or in the natural world."⁸ Joan Cadden argues for a more intense engagement with the political and ethical stakes of nature in the *Parliament*. While the poem reflects intellectual trends current in both

scholastic philosophy and vernacular poetry, Cadden concludes that Nature's warrant can extend only so far; leaving behind the more absolutist rule of Alan's Nature, Chaucer's poem is less optimistic about her powers, suggesting the ways in which "natural processes themselves corrupt order and set up conflicts among natures, so that full conformity with nature is impossible."⁹ All of these readings rightfully stress Chaucer's desire to enter into an imagined dialogue with these earlier writers on the subject of nature, though they offer contrasting interpretations of what Chaucer's attitude toward Alan and Jean may have been.

The fact that there is such widespread disagreement over Chaucer's intentions suggests that the *Parliament's* Nature is not meant simply as a referendum on either Alan's twelfth-century cosmological vision of nature or on Jean's more skeptical thirteenth-century one. As previous chapters have argued, Alan may have been the recognized point of origin for an allegorical tradition of personifying nature, but his vision was transformed into a platform for teasing out the difficult problem of the potential constraints of natural necessity on the human will, a philosophical problem whose aesthetic implications emerged in the vernacular with Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Rose* in the 1270s and one that was revisited by Guillaume de Deguileville in the fourteenth century. It is this recurring problem of necessity that, I will argue, is Chaucer's real interest in the *Parliament of Fowls*, where it is interrogated in the context of both his previous poetic predecessors and contemporary academic arguments that had connected earlier debates about the human will to the question of divine omnipotence, particularly God's ability to intervene in his own ordained order. An ordained order assumes that "things cannot be otherwise" but belief in an omnipotent deity demands that we see that things can always, at any moment, be otherwise than they are. What would be the effects of such a supernatural intervention into the everyday? What do the movements of the will have to do with the natural inclinations that are the visible manifestations of the divine order? And, finally, what does it mean that God directly orders the latter but not the former? While we may be tempted to see the chatty birds as "just" talking about love, it is these more profoundly speculative questions that animate the lively avian parliament at a distance. One clue to this wider poetico-philosophical target is the fact that Chaucer embeds these speculations about the relation of natural and divine orders within a story about how inclination works (or fails to work) in one very particular human subject: his narrator. Before we can assess the extent to which the poem's birds conform themselves to a natural order imagined as simultaneously determined and yet undetermined in the last instance, we need to pay special attention to how the narrator imagines himself in relation to "kynde," a power that gets identified here with the tidal pull of the God of Love's powers.

Love's greatest attribute in the *Parliament of Fowls* seems to be this

ability to confound the boundaries between “lyf” and “craft.” We see this difficulty announced in the poem’s somewhat opaque opening lines that describe how the contemplation of Love’s awe-inspiring operations causes something akin to amorous aphasia in the poet:

The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne,
Th’assay so hard, so sharp the conquerynge,
The dredful joye alwey that slit so yerne:
Al this mene I by Love, that my felynge
Astonyeth with this wonderful werkyng
So sore, iwis, that whan I on hym thynke
Nat wot I wel wher that I flete or synke.

(1–7)

Just as the narrator will later stand “astoned” (142) before the gate of Love’s garden, at the outset of the poem, his “felyng” or sensory faculty “astonyeth”—is stupefied—in the face of Love’s “werkyng.” Love, a natural force, has the power to disable our cognitive reflexes, to turn poets into stones. In defining what love is, the poet resorts to language that contrasts the effects of nature on human art. What may initially sound like a somewhat banal meditation on Love’s power is introduced by the proverbial opposition between the constraint of the natural duration of the human life span and the human aspiration to master nature through “craft.” In Oxford, Bodleian MS Fairfax 16, a later hand has helpfully glossed this passage with the Latin maxim “ars longa, vita brevis” (fol. 120r). What this phrase may have to do with human desire is not immediately apparent. In modern usage, the phrase has come to connote that, while a work of fine art such as a sculpture or a poem endures, an individual life is relatively short in comparison. Its medieval reception, however, suggests a very different understanding of the phrase. While the phrase’s *locus classicus* is to be found in Hippocrates, as *The Riverside Chaucer* notes suggest, it was most often attributed in the medieval period to Seneca, who invokes it in the opening passage of his *De brevitae vitae*, and attributes the phrase to Aristotle.¹⁰ In his late thirteenth-century book of advice to kings, *De regimine principum*, Giles of Rome also associates the phrase with Aristotle, arguing that human understanding is learned rather than innate:

Perfore, primo De Anima, þe filosofer meneþ þat þe soule is
more tyme vncunnyng þan connyng, for a man vseþ studye
long tyme or he come to parfit science and cunnyng. Panne
for oure lif is schort and artes and science ben harde and
longe and comonlich men ben ibore euel disposed to take
science, 3if we wollen come some tyme to parfit science, we
scholde bygynne in childhood and as it were from þe cradel.¹¹

While angels are inherently predisposed to a love of knowledge and spiritual contemplation, humans must be taught this love from infancy, since we are not naturally so inclined. Trevisa's late fourteenth-century translation also clarifies what remains unclear in Chaucer's usage: that "craft" here means study rather than artisanal skill, as when Middle English writers refer to "the seven craftes" or liberal arts, and "lyf" means not human existence generally but "the vegetable and animal life effected in a human being by the natural or vital spirit."¹² Chaucer's invocation of the proverb as his poem's incipit suggests less a meditation on the potential enduring quality of love poetry (as some critics have suggested) and more a desire to establish at the outset the tension within love itself: Is love a *techne*—a learned art, a human achievement—or is it an animating essence? Is love, like "science" a "craft so long to lerne" or is it an inherent inclination?

The distance between these viewpoints is significant for Chaucer's poem. If love is an art, it falls within the human realm; if a life force, it falls under the rubric of biological impulse. Chaucer's bookish narrator certainly treats love as *techne*; instead of pursuing love, he reads old books. He rationalizes this choice by claiming that one gains knowledge, not from experience, but from past textual authority:

For out of olde felde, as men seyth,
Cometh al this newe corn from yer to yere,
And out of olde bokes, in good feyth,
Cometh al this newe science that men lere.

(22–25)

The idea that new learning comes from old sources was a traditional aphorism and one that would have been widely affirmed by both poets and philosophers; however, the narrator's announced reading material characterizes him as a particular kind of reader, one enamored of the cosmological interpretations of nature popular in the twelfth century before the arrival of Aristotelian natural philosophy in the university.

This nostalgic view of nature is evident not just in the narrator's citation of Alan of Lille's *De planctu naturae*—perhaps the most influential poetic exponent of this vision—but also in the other text that the narrator keeps on his bedside table: Macrobius's commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*. Along with Alan, this book was one of the most well-known "old felde" out of which medieval writers gleaned Neoplatonic knowledge of the natural world, including an understanding of love's role in the cosmos. Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* describes how the consul of Rome, Scipio the Younger, dreams that he encounters his grandfather, Scipio Africanus, who gives him a vision of Rome's future as well as a bird's-eye view of the earth from the outer celestial spheres. The elder Scipio (whom Chaucer calls "Africanus") urges his grandson to preserve the commonwealth, saying that righteous governance will guarantee him a place among the saved souls after death.¹³

Chaucer's narrator summarizes not Cicero's original text, but Macrobius's fourth-century commentary on it, a text that greatly expands its source with encyclopedic knowledge of nature and human cognition. Macrobius's commentary was one of the "most important source[s] of Platonism in the Latin West in the Middle Ages" as well as "one of the basic source books of the scholastic movement and of medieval science."¹⁴ Chaucerian source studies sometimes reduce Macrobius only to the section on Cicero, treating it primarily as a source for dream lore (perhaps unconsciously echoing our modern preoccupation with dreams after Freud) or as a meditation on political ethics.

Medieval audiences, however, would have experienced the commentary as a wide-ranging encyclopedic source of natural and moral philosophy. To his Ciceronian text, Macrobius adds long disquisitions on the movement of the planets and their heavenly circuits, the music of the spheres, numerical explanations of cosmic harmony, and how humans differ from plants and animals. These additions produced a commentary that was, according to its modern editor, seventeen times as long as its original, with approximately half of Macrobius's text given over to cosmology, astronomy, meteorology, and geology. Its recognizably scientific character for medieval readers is confirmed by Sylvia Huot, who notes that a contemporary marginal gloss in a manuscript of the *Roman de la Rose* describes how Macrobius transformed Cicero's original text, "interserendo multa de philosophia naturali et de scientia mathematicis in duobus commentariis" (inserting a good deal of natural philosophy and mathematical science in two commentaries).¹⁵ The long final section of Macrobius's commentary addresses the problem of what moves the human soul: Does it move itself? Or is it moved by something outside of itself? Macrobius defends Plato's idea that the soul is eternally self-moved over and against the Aristotelian idea that the soul's movements are derivative, and hence subject to exterior (material or biological) influences. While Macrobius's Platonism came to him secondhand, he was a staunch supporter of Plato and an opponent of Aristotle. As we have seen, the question of whether the soul was subject to natural inclination or independent from it will be dramatized repeatedly throughout the poem, first in the characterization of the narrator himself and later in the dilemma of the formel eagle.

The narrator's interest in the scientific and cosmological aspects of Macrobius characterize him as sympathetic to the Neoplatonic viewpoint that divides the earthly world from its more perfect spiritual counterpart. In his idiosyncratic recounting of Macrobius's commentary on the *Somnium*, the *Parliament's* narrator highlights the commentator's cosmological additions, particularly his vision of the cosmos that emphasizes the comparative insignificance of the visible world around us. Africanus conducts a tour of the Milky Way only to conclude that "the lytel erthe" itself is to be disdained:

Than bad he [Africanus] hym [the narrator], syn erthe was
so lyte,
And dissevable and ful of harde grace,
That he ne shulde hym in the world delyte.
(64–66)

Real life—that is, spiritual life—happens elsewhere, in the outer spheres where the soul naturally resides; its time here on earth is, as it were, a prison. The trope of the earth’s insignificance, its appearance as a mere “punctus”—a mote of dust or a single point—when viewed from the vantage of the heavens was a popular one in Neoplatonic writings and one to which Chaucer returns in the *House of Fame*. In the *Parliament of Fowls*, Africanus concludes that since earthly life is fleeting, one should work for the “commun profite” in order that the soul should ascend to its spiritual bliss. Yet the ethical implications of Africanus’s physics lesson are not immediately self-evident. If the true life is the spiritual life lived above, why invest in human political structures at all? Africanus’s conclusion would not necessarily follow from a fourteenth-century worldview that valued the Christian above the civic and whose university curriculum was based on Aristotle rather than Plato. The rest of the *Parliament of Fowls* is an exploration of this seeming paradox: how does human volition acquire meaning in a cosmic world that is essentially indifferent to it? If material life is to be disdained, what anchors human ethical systems in the world?

The narrator’s “new science,” which is, in reality, the old science—a Neoplatonic understanding that emphasizes the fallenness of the physical world and humanity’s alterity from it—is ill-equipped to answer these questions. The fact that Chaucer invokes these old books does not necessarily mean that the poem endorses their conclusions. Rather, it is to ask questions whose answers may lie beyond the narrator’s own value system. The appearance of these Neoplatonic texts should be read as a significant aspect of the poetrnarrator’s characterization: he is presented as an avid consumer of transcendent theories of nature, a certain type of donnish, nostalgic reader by fourteenth-century university standards. The question is whether or not the poem, rather than the narrator, endorses the Neoplatonic view that disdains the material world as an impediment to spiritual truth and views the human as exceptional to the physical rules that bind the rest of nature.

If the waking narrator is characterized by his embrace of Macrobius’s cosmological vision, so too the dreaming narrator is characterized by another physics lesson, one that unfolds before the gates of Love’s garden. As we have already seen, the *Parliament’s* narrator manifests a distinctly ambivalent attitude toward the God of Love whom he serves. Standing alongside Africanus, the poet describes his inability to decide whether or not to enter Love’s realm with a proto-epic simile that compares his own plight

to that of a piece of iron immobilized between two magnets:

Right as betwixen adamauntes two
Of evene myght, a pece of yren set
Ne hath no myght to meve to ne fro—
For what that oon may hale, that other let—
Ferde I, that nyste whether me was bet
To entre or leve, til Affrycan, my gide,
Me hente and shof in at the gates wide.

(148–54)

In describing himself as a piece of iron caught between two magnets, the poet highlights his mental paralysis in the face of a Janus-faced Love who is the source of both bliss and pain. The poet, who now finds himself in a state of suspended inanimation, is subject to a literary version of the paradox that came to be known as “Buridan’s ass” (after the fourteenth-century natural philosopher Jean Buridan), wherein a donkey equidistant from both hay and water ultimately starves to death.¹⁶ As reimaged in the *Parliament*, this narrative impasse is only resolved when the poet is acted upon by an outside force: Scipio Africanus peremptorily pushes the narrator through the gate into Love’s garden.

This simile, framing the poet as a man-mineral assemblage, is surreal even by the relatively elastic standards of the medieval dream vision, and critics interested in Chaucer’s narrative self-representation have been (perhaps understandably) reluctant to discuss it at any length. When it is mentioned at all, it is usually deemed to be a rather obvious and clunky figure for the passivity of the poet.¹⁷ Yet like many of Chaucer’s authorial self-representations, this one opens out onto the broader question of the possibility or impossibility of representing the natural world more generally. Jeffrey J. Cohen has argued that medieval animals offer humans “possible bodies” in which culturally unsanctioned fantasies could be explored.¹⁸ While the *Parliament of Fowls* certainly offers up an array of such fantasy animal bodies, the poem also suggests that Cohen’s model could, for medieval writers, be extended one step further down the *scala naturae*: minerals too could act as possible bodies that house cultural fantasies about human relations to the nonhuman. The incident of the mineralized narrator allows Chaucer to explore what happens when the laws of natural necessity are suspended: what kind of world-making is possible under these conditions?

The magnetized metal to which Chaucer compares his narrator in the *Parliament of Fowls* was a conspicuous symbol of the sometimes occult workings of physical inclination. While the magnetic attraction that ensnares the poet’s ferric alter ego had been a subject of speculation since classical antiquity, it was only in the second half of the thirteenth century that Petrus Peregrinus first documented the laws of magnetic attraction and

repulsion, polarity and reverse polarity. Because every stone has a north and a south pole, just like the celestial sphere itself, Peregrinus concludes that the magnet “bears in itself the likeness of the heavens.”¹⁹ This idea of the “magnet as a microcosm” was elaborated in encyclopedic works such as Trevisa’s translation of *De proprietatibus rerum*, where magnetism serves as an analogy for the workings of the cosmos. In the lapidary section of the encyclopedia, the natural motions that order the cosmos are imagined as magnetic: “And þerefore þe worchinges of þe planetis is liche to þat ston *magnas* ‘adamaunt’ and to iren, for as iren is idrawe to þat stone, so eueryche creature vppon erþe haþ a maner inclinacioun of þe meoving of planetis.”²⁰ The motion of the magnet is a microcosm of the cosmos and participates actively in the inclinations that move all bodies great and small. Albertus Magnus had similarly argued that magnetic attraction proved that an inanimate object had the power to act in quasi-animate ways due to its substantial form.²¹ Magnetism functioned both as a metaphor *for* and evidence *of* a tangible physical reality.

Magnetism was just one visible manifestation of the usually invisible motions that worked according to sympathy and that were described at length in natural philosophical treatises. Other such sympathetic phenomena included the “doctrine of signatures”—the belief that an herb such as liverwort worked through sympathetic properties based on its resemblance to the body part it was thought to cure—as well as the natural motion that drew like to like in the material world. The motion of rocks more generally was often cited as evidence for the charisma of place in medieval physics, an idea that allowed inanimate objects the luxury of quasi-animate properties. The downward motion of the dropped rock, absent impediments, shows a body seeking to return to its natural home in the earth. Medieval rocks were not “quasi-animate” in the sense of self-willed, and Boethius carefully distinguishes between the two: an animal’s sense of self-preservation comes not from an act of will based on knowledge of its existential condition but from the “naturel entencioun of thinges” that drive it to preserve itself.²² Some thirteenth-century philosophers, following Aristotle, were to narrow this distinction, blurring the line between how humans and nonhumans were moved. According to Thomas Aquinas, the rock and the human will were subject to similar sorts of motions and motivations. Rocks and plants, while lacking cognitive faculties, still had an inherent tendency to move in particular ways, a tendency that was also at work in higher creatures, whether angels or humans: “Quaedam enim inclinatur in bonum per solam naturalem habitudinem absque cognitione, sicut plantae et corpora inanimata; et talis inclinatio ad bonum vocatur appetitus naturalis” (therefore some are inclined to the good solely through natural habit rather than through knowledge, as plants and inanimate bodies; and such inclination toward the good is called natural appetite).²³ In this way, Aquinas was to argue that the human will, though undetermined,

worked by analogy with other natural inclinations, since it was oriented toward a *bonum apprehensum* whose ultimate source was God.²⁴

It is this natural appetite that the *Parliament's* narrator lacks. His lack of inclination, the severing of bodily attraction from action, can be contrasted with another of Chaucer's narrating bodies in the *Canterbury Tales*: he is the opposite of the Wife of Bath, who, by her own account, claims always to follow her "inclinacioun" and her "appetit" in love, those tendencies to which both Venus and Mars predisposed her at birth.²⁵ The traffic between human and nonhuman appetites, between lovers and rocks, is particularly evident in lapidary accounts of the magnet, which was treated as one of the most conspicuous examples of mineral charisma, both in its apparent powers of self-locomotion and its presumed access to human interiority. According to Albertus Magnus, a husband could place a magnet under his sleeping wife's pillow. If faithful, she would automatically put her arms around her husband; if not, she would be cast out of the bed, repelled by the stone's powers.²⁶ The magnet as fidelity test suggests that minerals were not just an index to the psychological state of the human but a metric for determining it. The stone's own self-motion as well as the motions it induced in humans were subject to moralization in these popular treatises. In these ways, rocks played an exemplary role in helping to generate the epistemological systems that underwrote much popular and scholastic thought about the material world and the human place within it.²⁷

The context of Chaucer's simile, moreover, suggests that rocks were more than just a reflective mirror for the human: this is, after all, a world where stone walls talk and poets are rendered "astoned" (142) and mute in the face of such speech. It is the letters carved into the "grene ston" of the wall that define love in terms of Petrarchan *contrapasso*, words that subsequently petrify the narrator. In giving voice to the ambivalent nature of Love, the ostensibly lifeless stones echo the poet's own ambivalence about the God of Love before whose powers the waking narrator had earlier stood "astonied" in the opening lines of the poem (5).²⁸ This image of the speaking wall deploys the familiar rhetorical figure of prosopopoeia, wherein inanimate objects are given voice in such a way as to suggest that there is an equal and opposite figure of devoicing that also has calculable poetic effect. For Quintilian, prosopopoeia was defined as *factio personae*, not the voice of alterity but rather one that was always in dialogue with the human.²⁹ The *Parliament's* simile suggests a similarly dialogic trope that might be termed *factio rei*, wherein humans lose their voice, even as inanimate creatures gain one. In the *Parliament of Fowls*, people can be fictionalized as things with similarly fervid or barren inner lives. Once such an exchange takes place, exemplarity ceases to be a unidirectional mimesis, whereby passive animals or rocks merely ventriloquize human actors offering clear moral lessons or exemplary behavioral models (as is often the case in bestiaries and lapidaries). Rather, it is the vivifying lack of differentiation between people

and things that the poem establishes as the precondition for its moral experiment. In a world where both people and things can be fictionalized, relations among sentient and nonsentient creatures cannot be defined solely in terms of privation, the nonhuman defined in terms of its lack of consciousness or speech or the ability to fall in love. Nor are such categories, or the relations that they engender, stable. Instead, ontological categories are imagined as permeable rather than rigid; being is imagined as potentially circulating among categories rather than confined to a single step on the *scala naturae*. While such categories remain hierarchical, with the human participating in both the material and spiritual realms, such a circulatory model makes apparent the constitutive relations that exist even between rocks and humans. In a world where a sleeping woman's virtue can be ascertained through the occult "virtues" of a rock, the magnet functions as a *minerale moralisée* with a normative social function. As a technology for enforcing sexual norms in a patriarchal world (notice there are no men being repulsed from marital beds by magnets), rocks do not just reflect human mores but are shown to help establish and enforce them in the first place.

After its incorporation into encyclopedic culture, the mutual inclination of magnets and iron likewise becomes a topos in vernacular poetry, where it symbolizes the force of attraction that makes all "kyndely" creatures fall in love. In this ferrophilic world, a lovely face draws a lover's heart, "as the magnet doth iryn."³⁰ The idea of love as a "kyndely" force is underscored in Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*, when Nature describes the God of Love as her devoted deputy, the one who serves her so loyally and loves her so much that he "plus se veust ver mes euvres trere / que ne fet fers vers aimant" (wants to draw himself close to my works more than iron does to adamant).³¹ Poets such as John Lydgate assert that magnetic attraction is more than just a metaphor; it is the power of love that constrains all things. In his *Reson and Sensuallyte*, the chessboard on which the two lovers play, a metaphor for the game of love more generally, is made of adamant. It is by virtue of the stone's "kyndly disposcioun" that

It [i.e., adamant] draweth yren and eke stel,
By which ye may noten ful wel
That love throghe myght of his werkyng
Draweth to him euery thing,
Be yt never so strong nor harde,
Contrarious or frowarde,
And folke constreynyth to his law.³²

In this passage, physics and love were seen to work not just according to analogous laws but through the same medium.

In depicting his narrator as paralyzed rather than compelled by the adamant's quasi-mystical virtues, Chaucer rewrites this poetic topos in a symptomatically comic, Chaucerian vein. The *Parliament's* narrator lacks the

natural inclination—the “kyndely enclynynge” explained at such length to the narrator of the *House of Fame*—toward love; in this way, he is out of step with Love’s army as well as the immanent pattern of becoming characteristic of the late medieval natural world. If the magnet metaphor was usually used by vernacular poets to figure unselfconscious submission to the laws of “kynde” that were seen to guide love, Chaucer instead turns it into a figure for an exception to this rule; immobilized rather than excited by the magnetic field, his antipathetic narrator does not submit himself to its powers.

Behind Chaucer’s literal gesture of “self-ironization,” there lies a more serious philosophical point about the workings of inclination and will. Since, for Chaucer, nature as “a force of action ... precedes ethics”—in Sarah Stanbury’s phrase—the *Parliament* is a site for testing what this precedence may mean.³³ The narrator’s self-representation conspicuously stages how human moral choice emerges from a material world thought to be guided by natural sympathies and antipathies, movements that had both physical and spiritual consequences. The narrator’s quandary outside Love’s gate shows a failure of both natural inclination and human will. Chaucer’s narrator is an agent stuck between two ends, incapable of moving toward either, neither exercising his human ability to choose nor subject to the natural motions that exert influence on all material bodies. This double failure suggests a correspondence between these two occult forces. If Boethius’s *Consolatio* had been intent on drawing a line between these motive powers—separating the willful movements of the soul from the natural inclinations of things—Chaucer’s project appears to be quite different. His simile emphasizes how difficult it is to prize them apart: does the narrator lack natural inclination to love, or does he lack the ability to make a free choice to enter Love’s garden? The poem suggests that he lacks both: unprompted by an internal urge to love, he likewise cannot muster an exercise of the will: “No wit hadde I, for errour, for to chese / To entre or flen, or me to save or lese” (146–47). Unlike even the dumb beasts described by Boethius who preserve their lives out of natural necessity, the narrator finds himself unable to take action. The narrator occupies a seemingly radical ontological fringe: his situation suggests that a causal relation obtains between natural inclination and human volition. In the *Parliament*’s simile, a suspension of one entails, to some degree, a suspension of the other. If natural inclination does not sufficiently order behavior—if the magnetic force of love does not impel the poet—then it is less likely that he will exercise his own free will to do so. In the end, the poet doesn’t choose to enter Love’s garden; instead, he is acted upon by an external agent, shoved in by an impatient Africanus. In an Aristotelian world governed by inclined natural motions, physical location is causality, since all animate and inanimate beings seek their own rightful places. To know something is to know where it is supposed to ultimately end up; to understand a thing’s cause is to know what motivates its

movement toward its final form. Paralyzed by the virtues of the adamant, however, Chaucer's narrator is unwilling or unable to enter Love's garden, a creature lacking not just self-determination but even basic self-motion. If the narrator does not move himself through an independent will, and if he cannot be moved by the magnetic power of love, he stands fully in neither the realm of the human nor of nonhuman nature. Less psychological than scientific, less a kind of Freudian neurotic paralysis than a suspension of physical law, Chaucer's metaphor signifies a poet-lover who stands at an oblique angle to the rules of inclination that govern both the human and the nonhuman realms. In this way, the poetrnarrator proves himself to be as resistant to the magnetic sympathy that ostensibly united the created world as his reading material was uncongenial to the "new science" that would imagine Love's attraction as an Aristotelian physical inclination.

If nature for Chaucer is not the "liber, speculum, ut pictura" (book, mirror, or picture) found in Alan of Lille, neither is it Jean de Meun's scholastic *sophisma* nor Guillaume de Deguileville's eliminativist vision of an ethically supernumerary Nature. Chaucer's poem charts another—arguably more radical—course as it tests out what a Neoplatonic world free of inclination would look like in practice, first in its vision of a narrator free from the usual magnetic attractions of love and, later, in an avian world free from the natural imperative to reproduce. If Jean's continuation of the *Rose* had demonstrated the dangers of too much inclination, Chaucer's poem tests out the opposite hypothesis: What happens when there is too little inclination?

Inclined and Exceptional Birds

The *Parliament's* human narrator, having been reduced to a mute lump of iron, momentarily loses his voice in the face of Love's power. The chatty birds he observes within Love's garden, however, speak nonstop about the constitution and reach of this power until forcibly restrained by Nature herself. Given powers of agency and intellect, Chaucer's birds voice particularly human problems of the will and, in doing so, become ethical prostheses for the philosophical questions surrounding how rational agents choose from among competing alternatives. The ventriloquizing of the human by the animal in the *Parliament* goes beyond both the usual Aesopian avian drag and the familiar exemplary world of the medieval bestiary, while, as critics have noted, drawing heavily on the conventions of each.³⁴ Chaucer's birds imply that the animal world is not just a reflection of, or a model for, the human world, not just analogy or aspiration. Instead, the birds are an ideal medium for testing out how alike humans and animals actually are.

Modern critics seeking the meaning of Chaucer's allegory usually read

the *Parliament* as being primarily concerned with the vicissitudes of love, an understandable view given its subject matter and one that neatly anticipates our own cultural obsession with interior psychologies.³⁵ In arguing that the poem is just as focused on assaying the relative claims of natural inclination and will, I assert that its focus is outward as well as inward, more about process than result: the pressing question may not be *if* the formel eagle gets her mate but *how* she does or does not. The mechanics of this volitional process were being argued over in contemporary academic circles, where fourteenth-century scholastics debated the reach of voluntarism—the idea that the will, unfettered by the rational intellect, was always free to judge and to act. Kathryn L. Lynch has explored this philosophical approach to the poem in a series of insightful articles that see the poem as a response to the theological projects of Duns Scotus and, in a modified form, of William of Ockham, both of whose writings “severed the essential link between Nature, reason, and will, granting the will a larger measure of dignity and independence than it has possessed before ... but also depriving it of the surefooted guidance of reason or intellect, to whom the will had previously given precedence in the soul.”³⁶ Lynch’s careful excavation of this philosophical debate highlights how Chaucer’s language prioritizes the problem of choice over the act of choosing.

My argument in this section also elaborates on the poem’s attention to the problem of free will but argues that these concerns are only a subset of the poem’s larger philosophical aim: to provoke thought about how a belief in the contingency of the will—whether human or divine—and a correspondingly “strong” version of human exceptionalism can pose just as serious a danger to social and moral systems as natural determinism. In this way, the poem is not just a synchronic response to contemporary voluntarism but a diachronic engagement with scholastic arguments begun in the preceding century and the vernacular poets who subsequently wrestled with their import for representing nature thereafter. The poem, I will argue, is less a psychological crisis brought about by the clash of the formel eagle’s individual desire with a universal good—private desire interfering with public duty and common profit—than it is a philosophical thought experiment that explores how humans conceptualize the divine and natural orders (are they one or are they two?) and how these models then get put to use to legitimate sometimes conflicting worldviews. The poem insistently conflates the two orders, directing our attention to how Nature acts in the capacity of divine deputy; she is unequivocally “the vicaire of the almyghty Lord” (379). Under the noise of the squabbling birds, we can detect a serious refrain: does Nature have the right to change the rules of the mating game that she herself has instituted? The recognizable theological correlate of this question is: would God be willing to suspend his own ordained order? This question exploded among scholastics after the 1277 condemnation, becoming a central preoccupation of the fourteenth century;

answered affirmatively, it became a springboard for imagining all kinds of worlds, some very different from our own. But Chaucer, a poet and not a theologian, directs our attention to a slightly different though no less pressing question, the one that, I argue, animates Nature's personification and the bird parliament in the poem: What would be the effects of such a suspension of the ordained order? When Nature asserts, as she does at the poem's end, that things "cannot be otherwise," she challenges the audience to imagine just such an "otherwise."

The squawky parliament over which Nature presides is formally structured according to Aristotelian natural philosophical principles, even if those principles will later be challenged as the drama of mate seeking unfolds. Nature is described in her role as the ordering force behind both cosmic energies and earthly creatures. It is she who knits together "hot, cold, hevy, lyght, moyse, and dreye ... by evene noumbres of acord" (380–81), harnessing the striving properties of matter to the eternal yoke of divine form. The birds are arrayed around the goddess according to caste, a socially coded rank that is, in reality, based on the biological fact of what they eat, from the noble birds of prey to the seedeaters all the way down to the lowly waterfowl. Where critics have read this scene as a "naturalizing [of] class privilege"³⁷ that begins in the human world and then appeals to the natural world for affirmation, I would argue that this stratification shows the opposite process at work: biology is shown to be the basis for cultural mores. In Aristotelian natural philosophy, bodies do not get coated with a veneer of needs and desires; rather, natural inclination dictates the shape of bodies, which then act in certain determinate ways that, in turn, give rise to certain social behaviors. According to Aristotle's *Historia animalium*, birds are categorized according to the diverse physiognomies that enable feeding habits. For example, birds who hunt prey have crooked talons, those lacking such talons subsist on insects or plants, while the eating habits of waterbirds depend on whether they have webbed or split feet.³⁸ It is these biological divisions that determine the physical layout of Chaucer's bird parliament, where the "foules of ravyne" are "hyest set": next to them are the smaller birds that "eten ... as worm or thyng of which I tell no tale"; then come the graineating birds, those who "lyveth by sed" and who sit on the green; and, finally, the waterfowl who "sat lowest in the dale" (323–29). Thus every bird takes "his owne place" every year according to physical properties, "as hem Nature wolde enclyne" (320, 325). Natural inclination is here associated with physiological form and the charisma of place. Unlike the narrator who is unable to discern his proper place due to his ambivalent relation to love and natural appetite, the birds' "degree" is determined through a bodily imperative that translates into a particular physical location on Nature's meadow every year. In this Aristotelian arena, Nature carries out the biological imperative to pair like with like: "to every foul Nature yaf his make / By evene acord" (667–68). While some critics have seen this usage of

“accord” as referring to a reciprocal agreement between the mating pair, it is more likely that it refers to the nonconscious physical laws of sympathy that govern the natural world, the ones through which Nature had earlier yoked the insensible elements “by evene noumbres of acord.”³⁹ This is the same nonconscious tendency attributed to magnetized iron by the encyclopedias: “Iren haþ acord wiþ þe stoon adamas, and so þat stoon adamas draweþ iren to itself,” a vital magnetic force that also works in the human world where it “reconsileþ and acordeþ bytwene men and here wyfes.”⁴⁰ In this way, the ordained order in Love’s garden looks a lot like the one outlined in Aristotle’s *libri naturales*: both are structured according to regular dispositions and affinities.

Yet the role of inclination in the birds’ procreation is not as clear-cut as it is in their diet and their habitual locale. The inclined workings of “kynde” that initially array the birds around Lady Nature do not fully determine the system of choosing mates that we subsequently encounter. Nature’s speech to the assembly reveals a tension between the necessity of mating—the birds’ “nede” (384)—and the choice of mate: Nature’s speech grafts the vocabulary of natural causality onto the language of what William J. Courtenay has called “covenantal causality,” a theological model that seeks to explain how divine freedom is compatible with a world that operates according to observable laws.⁴¹ Mating is at first presented in the *Parliament* as an inherent inclination: Nature tells the birds that they will choose their mates “as I prike yow with pleasaunce” (389). This is the same natural drive that appears in the well-known opening lines of the General Prologue of the *Canterbury Tales*, where the sleepless birds call to one another all night long, “so priketh hem Nature in hir corages” (11).⁴² Nature goads inclination, and desire is shown to follow a teleology implanted by natural law, what Nature calls “my statut” and “my governaunce” (387). This teleological understanding is complicated by Nature’s subsequent insistence that birds also possess free will with respect to the selection of a mate. The birds are asked to choose according to their places, beginning with the royal tercel eagle:

And after hym by ordre shul ye chese,
 After youre kynde, everich as yow lyketh,
 And, as youre hap is, shul ye wynne or lese.

.....
 But natheles, in this condicioun
 Mot be the choys of everich that is heere,
 That she agre to his eleccioun,
 Whoso he be that shulde be hire feere.

(400–402, 407–10)

The orderly process of choosing is governed by necessity—the bird’s “nede” as a response to Nature’s “prike”—as well as by the rules of species

difference (“kynde”); however, these workings are contrasted with the ability of the lover to choose (“eleccioun”) and the beloved to agree. Once Nature has introduced the concept of election, it is enthusiastically taken up by the birds themselves. The royal tercel, the first of the eagle suitors to speak, emphasizes the unfettered circumstances under which he makes his decision: “I chese, and chese with wil, and herte, and thought, / The formel on your hond, so wel iwrought” (417–18). As the tercel will soon discover, however, this emphasis on free election has been complicated by Nature’s introduction of an additional factor into the process: a given bird’s choice is subject not just to the ratification of his chosen mate but also to his individual “hap,” an ambiguous term whose broad semantic range would have included “destiny,” “luck,” or, in some cases, even “providence.”⁴³

How Nature envisions the potentially complex interplay between “eleccioun” and “hap” is somewhat obscure here, though her speech can be clarified through comparison with fourteenth-century vernacular translations of earlier medieval philosophical texts that attempted to understand the mechanics of physical inclination, free choice, and the divine will. We find the two terms opposed to one another in an almost contemporary translation of Giles of Rome’s *De regimine principum*. Citing the authority of Aristotle’s *Physics* and his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Giles argues that it is necessary to have knowledge of an action’s end in order to be truly exercising one’s free will. To clarify how this volitional process works, he draws an analogy with archery: “For as archers þat seeth no3t the mark, þeigh he hitte þe marke, þat is bote his happe. So thei that knoweth nou3t the ende, thei3 a do wel and come to þe ende, þat is nou3t by aleccioun, bote by hap. Perfore þe philosofer [i.e., Aristotle] wol mene þat al knowleche of the ende is nedeful.”⁴⁴ Giles argues that choice (“aleccioun”) is not wholly free to the extent that it is conditioned by a necessary end, here defined in terms of Aristotle’s view in book 2 of the *Physics* where he states that the end is not just the last thing but the motivating best thing.⁴⁵ “Eleccioun” is here opposed to “hap.” While “hap” could mean “chance” or “fate,” Giles’s usage associates it with an unintended consequence that results from a lack of knowledge of ends. Chaucer would have encountered a similar usage of “hap” when he translated Boethius’s *Consolatio philosophiae*. In book 5, Boethius defines “hap” as part of his discussion of why humans have difficulty understanding how divine providence works. Lady Philosophy rejects outright the notion that “hap” is just uncaused chance, that a thing can occur on account of “foolisshe moevynge and by no knyttynge of causes”, since God ultimately orders everything. She explains that “myn Aristotle ... in the book of his Phisic” defines “hap” similarly and explicates it with a further Aristotelian example of buried treasure accidentally discovered by a farmer, an anecdote that would become a staple of scholastic discussions of chance.⁴⁶ Even though the hider of the treasure did not intend it to be found by the farmer tilling his field, and even though the farmer had

no intention of finding gold, both agents can be said to have caused the outcome through their actions. Lady Philosophy then extrapolates from this case to define “hap” in terms of providential causes: “hap is an unwar betydinge of causes assembled in thingis that ben doon for som oothir thing; but thilke ordre, procedinge by an uneschuable byndinge togidre, whiche that descendeth fro the welle of purveaunce that ordeyneth alle thingis in hir places and in hir tymes, makith that the causes rennen and assemblen togidre.”⁴⁷ Though some events may appear uncaused, in reality, they are the result of motives not readily available to human reason, those proceeding from the “well of providence,” but whose effects are exigent. For both Giles and Boethius, the key to “hap” is knowledge or ignorance of ends. For Giles, the will is free but only in relation to the necessity of a given end. The will cannot move itself; rather it has to be moved by a *bonum apprehensum*.⁴⁸ For Boethius (following Aristotle), what looks like a chance event or “hap” is actually a working toward purposes that are necessary but unknown.

In drawing on this earlier philosophical vocabulary, Chaucer’s Nature raises the compelling issue of the extent to which the birds control the selection of a mate and, perhaps more intriguingly, the extent to which the birds *think* that they are in control of that process. They believe (and Nature tells them) that they are exercising their free will, but there is a part of this process that happens according to ends that are hidden from the actors themselves, whether on account of nonconscious natural inclinations or the movements of unknowable, providential causes.

In alternating between the language of natural inclination (“kynde,” “need,” “prike”), free will (“choys,” “eleccioun”), and providential causality (“hap”), Nature raises the same questions that were at the heart of a contemporary university debate over the will that had begun a century earlier. While Nature’s language may initially sound like juridical language surrounding issues of consent, its more pertinent referent would have been theological discussion of how human will operates with respect to the divine will, an effect underscored by the poem’s insistent conflation of Nature’s powers with those of God.⁴⁹ As we have seen in preceding chapters, academic debate over the will pitted those who believed it to operate analogously to natural laws against those who saw it as wholly exceptional to those laws.⁵⁰ Following Aristotle, theologians such as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas contend that the will was usually subject to the same forces of inclination that governed the rest of the sublunary world; however, free will could, in the last instance, overrule natural inclination. In arguing that inclination worked in the physical world much the same way as it did in the ethical world, these writers promoted a “physics of the will” based on ends over and against a more autonomous will. This is the view assumed by Giles of Rome in the passage quoted above. This Thomist physics of the will, characteristic of the thirteenth century, can be contrasted with what came after. In early fourteenth-century England, there emerged a consensus, what

Hester Goodenough Gelber calls a “conversational community” among Oxford Dominicans, that the human will was undetermined with respect to the world and that it worked according to election and choice. Perhaps the most well-known promoter of these views was Ockham’s disciple, Robert Holcot. Although none of these Dominicans could be strictly labeled Thomist, all engaged with ideas about freedom and necessity in a vocabulary established by Aquinas in the preceding century. Unlike Aquinas, who argued for preserving natural necessity whenever it did not openly conflict with God’s absolute power, the fourteenth-century Dominicans came to believe that “the universe in all of its parts and processes [was] contingent.”⁵¹ A related belief operated in the covenantal theology characteristic of fourteenth-century Franciscans and, in a different vein, of the nominalists who argued that theological causality was in no way analogous to efficient causation in the natural world. According to William J. Courtenay, in covenantal causality “one thing does not instrumentally and physically cause another on the basis of its own nature but only on the basis of an agreement which is more or less legally binding.”⁵² This type of causality explains how divine will gets executed in the world and finds expression in the human will, not through efficient causality—instrumentality—but through an implicit agreement between God and his creatures. While this covenantal model took hold in England, writers such as Robert Holcot, Thomas Bradwardine, and John Wyclif pointed out the uncertainties that this model also introduced into the dialectical relation between God’s omnipotence and how his ordained powers manifest themselves in the world.⁵³

It is this tension between the covenantal language of how the will works and the language of natural causality that animates the subsequent exchange between Nature and the formel eagle. In their conflict, we see an acute test of the language of election when applied to both a supernatural deity and to her creatures. An anti-Troilus, the formel believes that she can and should exercise complete freedom of will in love. According to Nature, the formel is the “gentilleste” of all her creatures: “in hire was everi vertue at his reste” (376). This description suggests more than just a correspondence between outer form and inner moral character. The formel is the place to which virtue “repairs” in the sense of that term as used by the eagle guide in the *House of Fame*. She is the physical place to which the moral good is inclined to come by natural motion, and each virtue comes to reside naturally within her due to the magnetic forces that govern both the physical and metaphysical worlds. This is a characteristic of the “placialized” ethical world described by Aquinas in the thirteenth century and largely renounced by fourteenth-century theologians such as Scotus and Ockham, who emphasized that spiritual movements did not work by analogy with physical ones. While the formel eagle admits that she is under Nature’s governance, the bird appeals to her for an exemption from the law of “kynde.” Nature

grants “eleccioun” to the formel but, at the same time, reminds her that the natural order dictates that like should pair with like, thus the royal tercel, noblest and most worthy, should be her chosen mate. The formel acknowledges Nature’s rightful dominion over her but then asks for two things that effectively deny this rule. She demands to be given not just her choice but her “choys al fre” (649) and to be permitted a year’s respite before making this choice. During this time, she insists, she will not be forced to serve in Love’s army. The circumscription of Nature’s power seems to be due to the formel eagle’s widening definition of the freedom of her own will. While the female eagle will ultimately have to choose a mate, the process of that choice effectively undermines Nature’s powers. The formel’s dilemma is a seeming *insolubilia* in that it pits the free will of the individual against the natural order designed to ensure the preservation of the species, the “commun profit” invoked several times in the poem

Critics often suggest that the problem resides either in the failure of the bird parliament to reach consensus or with the formel eagle herself, unable or unwilling to make a choice. According to one critic, the formel’s desire for delay is due to her “inexperience”;⁵⁴ according to another, the formel may simply prefer to remain Nature’s creature rather than to be given to “any of the three egotistical, scrappy eagles who care only for themselves, for each other and for the prestige of possessing her.”⁵⁵ Yet the poem asks to be read less psychologically than philosophically. In seeking to understand the female eagle’s behavior, the poem directs our attention not to her inner emotional state but to the clash between different modes of causality: Has Nature failed to “prikke” the formel? Or has Nature’s incitement failed to take hold through some default in the eagle’s matter or form? Or is the formel eagle improperly exercising that free will that all humans (and eagles in human drag) possess? Or does the problem lie elsewhere?

The late medieval natural philosophical context described earlier suggests that the problem lies less with the formel eagle’s misuse of her will than in Nature herself. Nature’s own problematic relation to her voluntary acts is highlighted in the speech where she attempts to persuade the formel to accept the first eagle bachelor:

If I were Resoun, thanne wolde I
 Conseyle yow the royal tercel take,
 As seyde the tercelet ful skylfully,
 As for the gentilleste and most worthi,
 Which I have wrought so wel to my plesaunce
 That to yow hit oughte to been a suffisaunce.

(632–37)

Alexander Gabrovsky has carefully outlined how Lady Nature’s discussion of bird election and her own will seems to be indebted to the terms of future decision making familiar from modal logic: necessity, contingency,

possibility, impossibility.⁵⁶ But to what end? Nature's subjunctive ventriloquizing of Reason does not just show the difficulty of her position in a voluntarist world in which Nature (will) and Reason (intellect) have been split apart. The even more intractable problem arises when Nature herself is made to act as spokesperson both for natural necessity *and* for free will. By grafting the language of election on to her "prike," Nature has vitiated her own created order; it no longer has determinate force. The moment of impulsive desire, the need to produce like from like, is recast as rational choice, sexual instinct as volition. Nature must fall back on reason, appealing to the inherent qualities of the individual (the suitor's courtly speech) rather than the relational qualities of the system designed to ensure reproduction. Under these circumstances, Nature is, through her own decree, reduced to an advisory rather than a supervisory role in the process.

The poem frames this problem as one concerning the exercise of divine will: Nature runs into the limitations of her paradoxical situation when she tries, and fails, to convince the formel to conform herself to the goddess's wishes. Since Nature claims to have created the tercel according to "my plesaunce," thus it follows "that to yow [i.e., the formel] hit oughte to been a suffisaunce" (636–67). While "plesaunce" can mean desire or pleasure generally, it can also signify "the divine will," translating the Latin *placitum* in biblical and theological texts.⁵⁷ When Nature tries to insist that her own volitional creative act should serve as a sufficient model for the formel, the argument fails. Here we see a clash between two wills: Nature's "plesaunce" as opposed to the formel's "choys al fre." The lesson here seems to be: if Nature can act contingently, so can her creatures.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of Nature's position is that it is she herself who has rendered her rule untenable by saying one thing and doing another. Earlier in the poem, she claims that she cannot change her own rule: "my ryghtful ordenaunce / may I nat lete for al this world to wynne" (392), yet by granting an exemption to the formel, she does just that. Nature again asserts the inviolability of her own law at the poem's end: "Now, syn it may non otherwise betyde,"/ *Quod* Nature, "heere is no more to seye" (654–55). Nature's laconic conclusion makes the reader wonder: is it really the case that things could not have been otherwise?

In contemporary intellectual circles, Nature's conviction would have placed her in a decided minority; most fourteenth-century scholastics were profoundly invested in imagining what the world might look like if things came to pass otherwise than they usually do. This philosophical tendency had become more pronounced in the wake of the Condemnation of 1277, a proscription that was aimed, in part, at diminishing the reach of an Aristotelian naturalism that was seen to impinge on God's omnipotent powers.⁵⁸ According to the historian of philosophy Hester Goodenough Gelber, "in contrast to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, many Scholastics of the fourteenth and fifteenth viewed the world as radically contingently,

dependent upon a divine will able to will other than it does will.”⁵⁹ Theologians regularly contrasted the created world with what it could otherwise have been. The distinction they explored was one between, in the words of William J. Courtenay, “what God *theoretically* could do on the basis of his omnipotence, *de potentia absoluta*, and what he *in fact* does do and will do on the basis of his revealed will, *de potentia ordinata*.”⁶⁰ Such hypothetical possibilities raised by divine actions were to become a characteristic of post-1277 philosophical thought: What would happen if God created other worlds? Destroyed this one? Changed the past? In emphasizing the absolute power of God to do anything that did not involve the divine in a direct logical contradiction, fourteenth-century theologians began to explore *secundum imaginationem* a whole new set of physical and metaphysical possibilities. Many topics in which there had been little previous interest because they had been unthinkable to Aristotle and his earlier scholastic followers became philosophical commonplaces. If God could move the cosmos in a rectilinear fashion, what other types of movement were possible? If nature does not necessarily abhor a vacuum (as Aristotle had averred), under what circumstances could one occur? If, post-1277, philosophers accepted that God could make as many other worlds as he wished, what would these other worlds look like?⁶¹ Writers such as Jean Buridan, William Ockham, and later Nicole Oresme took up these questions that Aristotle had rejected, and they offered new models for looking at the world that challenged certain long-held tenets of the Aristotelian canon. This tendency to analyze God’s power in terms of what may have been—but was not—led to a fourteenth-century resurgence in the genre of *insolubilia* literature, treatises such as that written by Thomas Bradwardine, the Augustinian archbishop of Canterbury mentioned by Chaucer in the *Nun’s Priest’s Tale* and an active participant in debates analyzing the claims of necessity and contingency. Bradwardine was an ardent theorist of the contingency of divine omnipotence, even arguing for the contingency of not just future but past events. Bradwardine’s participation in these debates led Chaucer’s acquaintance Ralph Strode to proclaim Bradwardine “the prince of modern philosophers of nature.”⁶² As a result of these new philosophical tendencies, Aristotle’s penchant for declaring certain principles to be both necessary and impossible to be otherwise came under sustained attack in the fourteenth century.

In an intellectual world where counterfactuality with respect to the divine will was taken for granted, it would be puzzling to hear a quasi-divine power declare that “things cannot be otherwise.” In the dream world of the *Parliament*, it is particularly so, since we have seen that it is Nature’s own intervention in her ordained order that results in the attenuation of her powers. She has claimed the natural order to be fixed, even as she grants the occasional day pass to creatures of her choosing. More than just a bout of supernatural false consciousness, Nature’s attitude has significant

philosophical consequences. When natural laws are only selectively enforced, the powers of sympathy that bind the natural world are loosened. “Accord” loses its magnetic allure. Physical place as inclination no longer exerts any influence on metaphysical choice. What we see in the interchange between Lady Nature and her formel eagle is an encounter that attempts to preserve the liberty of both divine and created wills simultaneously. The result of this encounter, however, suggests that, in lifting (even temporarily) all limitations upon the contingency of the human will (here avian will in drag), the absolute freedom of the divine will may be compromised. In a world where even Nature does not have to follow Nature’s laws, Nature seems more like a harried social worker trying to negotiate a familial settlement than the magisterial judge described by Alan of Lille. Nature evokes the idea of an omnipotent God flexing her absolute powers, intervening in the ordained world only to cause disorder.⁶³ This disorder is bearable in the short term, for a year, but its appearance suggests that such interventions are not to be actively sought out and theorized in the vein of a Scotus or an Ockham.

If the model of a deity who tries to work simultaneously *de ordinata* and *de absoluta* looks less compelling in the imaginative world of Chaucer’s dream vision than it did in certain scholastic thought experiments *secundum imaginationem*, that is because the potential costs are shown to be relatively high at the poem’s end. Even though Nature had already guaranteed her most noble creature “that she hireself shal han hir eleccioun” (621), the formel desires something more than to have her own way. What the formel demands, and is granted, is a more extreme privilege, to be given her “choys al fre” (649). The formel wishes to exercise her will subject to no external pressure whatsoever: free from reason, free from nature, free even from the theological imperative that *liberum arbitrium* should work by analogy with divine freedom of the will. Impervious to Nature’s pricking, the formel remains unconvinced by the language of rationality and affinity. Uncoerced by a *bonum apprehensum* in either its biological form (procreation) or its social one (marriage for the common good), the formel excuses herself from the natural order. Critics often focus on the formel eagle’s capriciousness—her unwillingness to make a decision—but the poem directs our attention equally to Nature’s capriciousness—the goddess’s willing intervention into her own regular processes, an intervention that renders the future (and the future of the species) contingent. The fantasy of the noble woman who gets to dispose of herself is only made possible by the enabling fantasy of a world unrestrained by the call of either natural or covenantal necessity. In such a world, what moral authority does nature (or Nature) effectively wield? The *Parliament* demonstrates what happens when, wishing to avoid the potentially corrosive effects of natural determinism, the natural order is imagined as premised on the utterly contingent liberty of both human and divine wills. In such a world, divine will—“plesaunce”—cannot serve as an

appropriate model for the exercise of human “choys al free.”

Having resisted Love’s authority, it is no coincidence that, at the poem’s end, the formel’s oblique relation to the natural world resonates with that of the antipathetic narrator. Their respective preferences to duck Love’s power show a disaffinity (if not a disaffection) with the natural motions that dispose the rest of the world. This shared resistance raises the question of the degree to which love can be considered “natural” in the human volitional sphere at all. Both the formel and the narrator refuse to use their respective wills to choose service in the absence of that unwilling natural inclination that is shared by the rest of the created world as depicted in the poem. Both the narrator and the formel eagle lack a sense of their respective final resting places in a teleologically directed natural cosmos. Even as the other birds are paired off in “evene acord” (668) and join together to sing a roundel in Nature’s honor, the pair remain apart, outside the enchanted circle of natural inclination. Moreover, the formel’s choice to remain chaste means that her potential suitors must remain so as well for the duration of the coming year (659–65). While the poem’s ending suggests that marriage will eventually occur—the formel must after all make a decision in a year’s time—Nature’s conspicuous insistence on election has potentially destabilized her own regular processes. The poem’s final stanza underscores this discordant note by returning us to the human world where the narrator pursues not the communal life dictated by the cosmic harmony of the singing birds but the solitary life of books (693–99). His position outside of the human social world recalls the suspension of inclination represented in the poet’s earlier comparison of himself to a piece of iron resistant to Love’s magnetic pull. He has, it seems, not progressed very far. At the poem’s end, the narrator still attempts to partition off the moral from the physical worlds. He turns to books—to “mete som thyng for to fare / The bet” (698–99)—a moral purpose that brings us back to a continual cycle of reading: he awakes and turns to his books “to reede upon, and yit I rede alwey” (696). While the ordained order is still in effect, the exceptions of both the formel and the narrator have raised questions about the viability of Nature’s rule more generally. This ending suggests that when creatures (whether human or animal) are given absolute freedom to choose, to live without Nature’s prick, the likely outcome is solitary abstinence, a consequence that can be just as morally disruptive as impulsively following one’s sexual instincts without the governor of reason.

The *Parliament of Fowls* imagines radical chastity rather than rampant promiscuity as the outcome of complete contingency in the human and divine wills. This somewhat startling conclusion is the photo-negative result of the poetic experiment surrounding Nature’s authority staged in Jean de Meun’s continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*. There, Nature also became a spokesperson for the contingency of the human will at the expense of her own ordained order; however, her leaving her traditionally assigned role

made it possible for the natural determinism of Genius and La Vieille to triumph. In the *Parliament*, Chaucer will suggest that there is another, equal danger in uncoupling natural inclination from free will: the dissolution of the links between the human and the animal. If Chaucer's poetic predecessor Jean had imagined what happens when humans become like animals, deprived of will and hence moral self-determination, Chaucer imagines the opposite situation at the end of the *Parliament of Fowls*: when humans are not animal enough, the absence of "kynde" leads to potential social disorder.

That Chaucer was interested in both poetic and academic debates surrounding the physics of the will is evident from the fact that his courtly lovers so often express their romantic longings in similarly philosophical language. Whereas the *Parliament's* formel and tercel eagles have complete confidence in their self-determination and the efficacy of their own choices, a character such as Troilus voices the opposite feeling in love: that he lacks volition, that he is moved by material planetary influences and divine agents that are outside of himself. In these very different lovers, Chaucer is shown to be just as suspicious of those who believe themselves to have complete freedom of will as he is of those who believe that they lack it altogether.

If one is subject to nature's laws only through consent (the *Parliament's* formel) or if one believes oneself to be wholly exceptional to them in the first place (the *Parliament's* narrator), then everything is contingent. By the time Chaucer was writing, the dangers of too much contingency were seen as potentially just as pressing as the dangers of too little. After the controversy over Ockham, the Thomist view that some type of ordering principle could be admitted in discussions of the human began to seem more appealing to orthodox writers.⁶⁴ The *Parliament* enacts a thought experiment in which the poet explores what nature would look like without necessity. In Nature's solution to the formel eagle's dilemma, we see a higher power willingly suspending her own laws, a moment, were it to be written in a quodlibetal exercise rather than a poem, that would demonstrate God's absolute power to intervene directly in the world, to suspend his current ordination if it so pleased him. In the *Parliament of Fowls*, a skepticism about avian courtly love stands in for a more radical critique of volitional models that sought to cash out Aristotelian natural philosophy as the price for preserving an extreme voluntarist theology. In this way, Chaucer's Nature can be read as a critique of transcendent theological and philosophical worldviews that magnified the will at the expense of any natural inclination or that tried to dispense with Nature altogether. The parable that the poem enacts is one that is less about the human misuse of will than it is about the dangers attendant on the contradictory human expectations of the category of nature itself.

It is not that the laws of "kynde" are insufficient to human moral situations; it is that humans are perverse enough to believe that "kynde" and contingency make comfortable bedfellows. When one is overconfident of

one's powers of choice, whether in love or salvation, the results of this naïveté are shown to be, at best, philosophical incoherence or, at worst, biological *acedia*, a reproductive sloth that threatens the species.

Despite Nature's wobbly relation to her own governance, her authority is not undermined in the *Parliament*. In fact, its very form suggests otherwise: in using birds to voice human ethical questions, Chaucer rejects the idea that the will can ever be fully autonomous from nature—the problem with too much election—but once “kynde” has been downgraded to the status of counsel, it is difficult to see what might effectively guarantee the moral authority of a nature that can appeal neither to an inherent magnetism that unites human and nonhuman worlds nor to “preve by reason” (534) in the words of one of the bird parliamentarians. It is not that the formel is too choosy or that the bird parliament is too partisan, but that love, as a manifestation of nature, is being defined in two mutually exclusive ways: as both natural inclination and as an effect of the human will, as both “lyf” and “crafte.” It is these same questions about the relation of nature to human art, contingency to necessity as well as the challenges of using divine omnipotence as a model for the human exercise of will that Chaucer will revisit much later in his poetic career in the *Physician's Tale*.

“Thus Semeth Me That Nature Wolde Seye”: Ventriloquizing Nature in the *Physician's Tale*

Lo! I, Nature,
Thus kan I forme and peynte a creature,
Whan that me list; who kan me countrefete?

—Chaucer, *Physician's Tale*

If, therefore, purpose is present in art, it is present also
in nature. The best illustration is a doctor doctoring
himself: nature is like that.

—Aristotle, *Physics*

Like the *Parliament of Fowls*, the *Physician's Tale* personifies Lady Nature as part of its exploration of the consequences of suspending natural inclination in the human world. Despite the fact that both poems allegorize Nature in relation to questions of the will, critics have seldom placed them in dialogue with each other, perhaps because they are imagined as examples of, respectively, “early” (read: conventionalized and continental) and “late” (read: more realistic and English) Chaucers or because they deal with such seemingly disparate subject matters. My argument here is that, taken together, they offer evidence of Chaucer's abiding interest in what happens when the human will, imagined to work in a similarly contingent fashion as

the divine will, gets extended in the visible world.

The *Physician's Tale* and the *Parliament of Fowls* pose comparable questions about nature's authority, the claims of art as *techne*, and how inclination works in love. The *Physician's Tale* begins with a description of the fair Virginia, imagining Nature's pride in her matchless beauty, a beauty that would be impossible to portray by merely human means. When this incomparable beauty inspires illicit desire in the judge Apius, who then schemes to have her brought into his power, Virginia's father decides that the girl must die rather than be shamed. Her death at her father's hands invites many questions: Was Virginia's death necessary (as her father assumes)? What moral should readers ideally take away from this tale? Is it, as the Physician himself suggests, an example of the limitations of human knowledge in the face of God's inscrutable providence? Or is it, as the Host alternately suggests, a lesson about the twinned influences of Fortune and Nature on human fate? On the surface, this grim tale of lust and familial violence would appear to have little in common with the comic world of squabbling birds depicted in the *Parliament of Fowls*. Yet both poems dramatize the competing claims of nature and art through the topos of a female faced with unsolicited male desire. Both the formel eagle and Virginia are beloved by Nature as examples of her capacity to create feminine perfection; each is a paragon of physical beauty backlit by a luminous inner virtue. The poems stage two contrary responses to the premise of unwanted masculine attention: the formel eagle is given the power of "eleccioun," while Virginia is utterly deprived of it. In both poems, a personified Nature acts as an alibi for a potentially radical commitment to chastity. In the *Parliament of Fowls*, Nature affirms the formel's right to defer her suitors, and, hence, to take an entire caste of birds out of sexual circulation, while, in the *Physician's Tale*, Virginia's father, Virginius, argues that a father's natural love for his daughter demands her death in the face of a threat to her virtue. Both poems test out a thesis about how "natural" these models of love actually are, but the *Physician's Tale* goes even further by asking: what are the ethical consequences when human actors—whether physicians, poets, pilgrims, or philosophers—assume Nature's voice?

That Chaucer's Physician tells a tale that begins with a personified Nature is unsurprising given his description in the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*. Nature was imagined by Aristotle as a "doctor doctoring himself," since it always acted for a purpose, just as a doctor attempting a cure acts for a determined end—to restore natural balance—even if the outcome is not always predictable. Chaucer's portrait of the Physician emphasizes those aspects of his medical practice that reflect his natural philosophical knowledge: he is described as learned in the liberal arts, a master of "magyk natureel" (416) as well as humoral medicine and surgery. The detailed account of his knowledge of many Greek and Arabic medical sources suggests, according to Jill Mann, the "satire on doctors' parade of

science” that can be found in estates portraits that condemn medical practitioners who care more for collecting fees than for ensuring the physical well-being of their patients.⁶⁵ Chaucer’s Physician, who “lovede gold in special” (444), is certainly to be counted among these. Yet the portrait takes pains to establish not just his greed, but also his intellectual *habitus*. The Physician’s practice is described in terms of the catchphrase of Aristotelian causal science: to know something is to know its cause; hence, “the cause yknowe, and of his harm the roote, / Anon he yaf the sike man his boote” (423–24). More specifically, it appears that Chaucer’s doctor is one of those with an education in natural philosophy who choose to become not a wise cleric but one of the “riches medisans” denounced by the author of the thirteenth-century encyclopedia the *Image du monde*, who are “mauvès et envieus, qui nul bien ne veulent aprendre” (evil and envious, [and] who wish to learn nothing worthwhile).⁶⁶ It is the case that, as Marshall Leicester reminds us, the General Prologue descriptions do not establish a transferable psychology from teller to tale, and yet the Physician’s portrait there does lead us to expect a tale interested in causal explanations.⁶⁷ The tale he tells does not disappoint in this respect.

Chaucer approaches his inquiry into the potentially causal workings of both nature and human free will in the *Physician’s Tale* by recasting the wellknown medieval exemplum of Virginia into an exploration of the bounds of familial love, a love that is ostensibly ensured by the generation of like from like, Virginia from Virginius. As critics have shown, Chaucer inherits this story from Livy by way of Jean de Meun’s continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*. Chaucer, however, refashions the moral questions associated with the exemplum by prefacing the story of Virginius and his daughter with the long description of Nature’s relation to art that prefates her confession much later in Jean’s poem.⁶⁸ In Jean’s continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*, the Virginia episode serves as a brief example in Reason’s discourse about the necessary and overwhelming power of love, a force superior even to that of justice, which can potentially be corrupted. Reason tells the story of the evil judge Apius, who having been spurned by Virginia, instigates his sergeant Claudius to initiate false proceedings, claiming that the girl was a servant in his household who had been stolen in her youth. When Apius grants Claudius’s suit, Virginius acts without hesitation:

car il par amor sans haïne
a sa bele fille Virgine
tantost a la teste coupee
et puis au juige presentee
devant touz en plein consitoire

(For, through love and without any hatred, he immediately cut off the head of his beautiful daughter Virginia and then presented it to the judge before all, in open court.)⁶⁹

Virginius is immediately condemned to death by Apius, yet the citizenry rallies to the father's defense, instead imprisoning the judge and his coconspirators. In Reason's discourse, Virginia's death prevents a miscarriage of justice that would have resulted in familial dishonor. The same exemplum is found in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, where, as in Jean de Meun, it is used to illustrate the corruption of rulers rather than a potentially broader problem besetting the human will. Gower's version magnifies the political exemplarity of the situation even further: Virginius is away from Rome fighting for his country when he hears of the judge's evil intentions toward his daughter; after killing his daughter, he claims that it is necessary to fight injustice at home before fighting foreign enemies.⁷⁰ The exemplum of the corrupt magistrate is impressed by Chaucer into the service of a different set of questions that focuses less on political expediency and male honor and more on how the individual will functions in a providential world.

Unlike its sources and analogues, Chaucer's version asks whether Virginius is compelled to act or whether he chooses to act. In order to run this moral experiment, Chaucer adds a discussion between Virginius and Virginia that allows the audience to see (and judge) Virginius's rationalization as well as Virginia's response to it. Many critics have read this addition as Chaucer's desire to redraw Virginia as a proto-Christian virgin martyr, to turn the Roman exemplum into the "legend of a secular saint."⁷¹ While the tale certainly has affinities with the events of the *Clerk's Tale* and the *Second Nun's Tale*, this hagiographical comparison obscures some aspects of the tale even as it clarifies others. Chaucer does indeed expand the role of Virginia, but her expanded role shifts the focus not to the girl alone but to her relation with her father and his potential motivations. In the *Roman de la Rose*, Virginius's motivation is not explored, it is merely noted that the father "change honte por damage par merveilleuz apensement" (exchanges shame for injury through a marvelous way of reasoning).⁷² While Virginius's thinking is deemed "merveilleuz," we are asked neither to second-guess his actions nor to interrogate the mechanics of his decision-making process. In Chaucer's version, we are privy to this astonishing thought process, one that Virginius narrates to his daughter:

O deere doghter, endere of my lyf,
Which I have fostred up with swich plesaunce
That thou were nevere out of my remembraunce!
O doghter, which that art my laste wo,
And in my lyf my laste joye also,
O gemme of chastitee, in pacience
Take thou thy deeth, for this is my sentence.
For love, and nat for hate, thou most be deed;
My pitous hand moot smyten of thyn heed.

Virginia's guiltlessness in the face of events is keenly felt by her father; he regrets that she must come to such an undeserved end. Despite her innocence, Virginius's "sentence" follows from his understanding of the two choices he finds operative: either death or shame. Since shame is not to be countenanced, he quickly moves to the necessity of her death. The auxiliary verbs he chooses underscore this necessity: she "most" be dead and he "moot" cut off her head. The verb "moten" suggests that Virginius is compelled by outside forces to undertake her death; the verb implies that events have overruled his individual will.⁷³ That he sees his sentence as an impersonal expression of a higher moral imperative is also evident in the fact that he avoids using a first-person construction. It is not Virginius who will kill his daughter but his "pitous hand," curiously distanced from his body and the moral agent that will deliver the blow. The metonymic construction suggests a marked lack of agency: Virginius is merely the conduit for a justice that originates outside of its executor.

Importantly, Virginia's response to her father, also Chaucer's addition, resists his assertion of the workings of an impersonal law of moral necessity that demands her death. Instead, her language repeatedly highlights her father's volition. After initially resisting his "sentence," Virginia capitulates, but her language makes clear that she believes him to act not from necessity but from his own capacity to dispose of her as he pleases: "Yif me my deeth, er that I have a shame; / Dooth with youre child youre wyl, a Goddes name!" (249–50). Virginia restores her father's "wyl" to the abstract moral algorithm that he has suggested is responsible for her impending death. She counters his imperative—"Take thou"—with her own more appropriate "Yif me," a construction that emphasizes that the "gift" of her death is his to bestow or withhold voluntarily.⁷⁴ In neither Jean's *Rose* nor in Gower's *Confessio* is this exemplum about the constraints of the will in relation to what is dictated by natural law. In Jean, the story is ultimately an example of homosocial *contrapasso*: the intended injury to Virginius's familial honor is avenged in the corrupt judge's prison suicide. In Gower, the exemplum appears under the rubric of how a good governor should be chaste. While Gower's version, like Chaucer's, is concerned with virginity, it is unconcerned with locating from whence the imperative to chastity arises; it is an assumed virtue. Chaucer's version, by contrast, shifts the moral register to ask the fundamental question: if Virginia is killed to ensure her chastity, what licenses her killing?

In Chaucer, the motivation of Virginius's actions toward his daughter—does he act out of necessity as he suggests or of his own free will as she points out?—forms a major interpretive crux of the tale, a theme anticipated by the evocation of Nature's representational order at the tale's outset. Nature's earlier appearance should be the context in which we read

Virginius's attempts to "naturalize" his judgment, a judgment that he claims is a necessary part of the "fostering" undertaken from her birth. The extent to which Virginius might be blameworthy is heightened by his own invocation of his fatherly bonds; his repeated direct address and apostrophe—"Doghter ... O deer doghter ... O doghter"—reminds the reader of his paternal obligations. He insists that he has "fostred up" his daughter with diligence, an insistence that heightens the pathos of his "sentence." This emphasis on "fostering" echoes the Physician's earlier speech on the responsibility that fathers and mothers have to care for their children (93–104), a passage that is again unique to Chaucer's version and that is often dismissed as a digression.

Far from a digression, this earlier passage on governance speaks to the difference between natural as opposed to learned behaviors, a dichotomy discussed in the *Parliament of Fowls* under the rubrics of "lyf" as opposed to "craft." In the *Physician's Tale*, the glue between parent and child is social: fathers and mothers must set a good example and punish bad behavior. The Physician's account of paternal responsibility is at odds with the one following the Virginia exemplum in Jean's *Roman de la Rose*. There, parental care is defined not as nurture but as nature, an innate impulse that humans share with the rest of the animal world. Jean's Reason tries to convince the lover to give up his carnal desire for the rose by offering him other, preferable models of love. A parent's habitual love for its child, which Reason terms a "natural inclination," is one such aspirational model:

Autre amor naturel i a,
Que Nature es bestes cria,
Par quoi de leur feons chevissent
Et les aletent et norrissent.
De l'amor don je tiegn ci conte,
Se tu veuz que je t'en raconte
Quels est li defenissemenz,
C'est naturiex enclinemenz
De volair garder son semblable
Par entencion convenable,
Soit par voie d'engendreüre,
Ou par cure de norreture.
A ceste amor sunt presz et prestes
Ausinc li home com les bestes.
Ceste amor, combien qu'el profite,
N'a los ne blame ne merite,
N'en font n'a blamer n'a loer.
Nature les i fet voer,
Force leur fet, c'est chose voire,
N'el n'a seur nul vice victoire;

Mes sanz faille, s'il nel fesoient,
Blasme recevoir en devoient.
Ausinc con quant uns hom menjue,
Quel loenge l'en est deüe?
Mes s'il forjuroit le mengier,
L'en l'en devroit bien ledengier.

(There is another love, a natural one, which Nature has created in beasts, by means of which they rear their young, suckle them, and nourish them. If you want me to tell you the definition of this love of which I speak, it is a natural inclination to wish to preserve one's likeness by a necessary intention, either by engendering or by caring for nourishment. Male and female of man as well as beast are prepared for this love. However much good it does, this love carries neither praise nor blame nor merit; it is to be neither praised nor blamed; Nature makes creatures give themselves to it; in truth, they are forced to it. Nor does this love bring any victory over vice. But, without fail, if men do not perform this duty, they should be blamed. When a man eats, what praise is due him? But if he foreswears food, he should certainly be shamed.)⁷⁵

Reason argues that parental love, a “*naturiex enclinemenz*,” is compulsory in both animals and humans. He compares familial love to the act of eating; it is an “*entencion convenable*.” While Dahlberg translates “*convenable*” as “*suitable*,” here it probably means something closer to “*predisposed*.”⁷⁶ A quasiautomatic response, it resides outside of an exclusively human, deliberative moral nexus. This type of love obviates the will: like other animals, humans are “*forced*” to do it by nature, and, hence, are not to be praised for it. However, the neglect of parental love is inherently blameworthy insofar as it goes against nature. While Reason’s attempts to convince the lover to trade his pursuit of erotic pleasure for the surer benefits of a natural, familial love fail in the *Roman de la Rose*, they do give us a context for reading the exemplum of Virginia that precedes it.

In Chaucer’s version of the Virginia exemplum, however, there are conflicting accounts of whether or not parental duty necessitates Virginia’s ultimate fate. Chaucer’s additions heighten the contrast between what humans must do as opposed to what they choose to do. The Physician’s model of parenting as social construction is in tension with the biologically imitative aspect of the father-daughter relation stressed in Chaucer’s rewriting of the exemplum. Virginia is a copy of Virginius, virgin daughter seemingly abiogenetically sprung from virgin father. It is no coincidence that Virginius’s wife is only mentioned once in passing and plays no role in the exemplum. Despite his daughter’s resemblance to him, Chaucer’s

Virginus lacks the inherent desire to “garder son semblable” that Jean’s Reason had described as necessary to all creatures. If we follow Reason’s logic, natural parental love stems in part from a desire to preserve one’s likeness. Virginia, as a little Virginus, should induce in her original a natural desire to protect her. This duplication should elicit a corresponding empathy, as it does in the rest of the world governed by the norms of Aristotelian natural philosophy, since the “doctrine of sympathy” in medieval physics and medicine asserts the mutual predisposition of similar things. Much like the antipathetic narrator of the *Parliament of Fowls*, Chaucer’s Virginus is out of step with this natural inclination, both innate fatherly love and the sympathetic doctrine that rules the rest of the material world. Like the Physician’s earlier speech on parenting, Virginus frames parental love as a social rather than a natural obligation, one driven by moral imperatives (shame and honor) rather than biological ones (care and feeding). Virginus’s words to his daughter attempt to rationalize his “sentence” by suggesting that it arises from an impersonal moral standard beyond his personal volition, an assertion challenged in his daughter’s own lament for her plight. Chaucer’s retelling thus emphasizes the contradictory claims that are placed on nature as a moral authority and how flexible such claims may appear in the face of human rationalization. While the *Roman de la Rose* passage on parental inclination does not provide a definitive answer as to how we should interpret Virginia’s sacrifice, it does clarify the philosophical stakes in placing this event under the sign of Nature, as Chaucer does so conspicuously in the *Physician’s Tale*.

Critics have frequently discussed the effects of Virginia gaining a voice in this exemplum—how it opens up the moral space in which to question Virginus’s actions—but Nature’s voice also opens up a space for questioning both Virginia’s death and the various, sometimes contradictory, accounts that are given as to what has authorized that death. My contention here is that Chaucer’s decision to personify Nature in the *Physician’s Tale* is connected to his decision to allow the usually silent, quiescent Virginia to speak. If Virginia is allowed to raise doubts about the operation of her father’s will, Nature’s earlier speech suggests that these concerns apply not just narrowly to this single girl’s death but also more broadly to the idea of Nature/nature as a license for human choice. The demand for virginity at all costs is ultimately the result, taken to its logical limit, of Nature’s contention that the worlds of art and nature are separate. Nature announces this divide at the poem’s opening when, having created the lovely Virginia, she brags of her own inimitable powers:

For Nature hath with sovereyn diligence
Yformed hire in so greet excellence,
As though she wolde seyn, “Lo! I, Nature,
Thus kan I forme and peynte a creature,

Whan that me list; who kan me countrefete?
 Pigmalion noght, though he ay forge and bette,
 Or grave, or peynte; for I dar wel seyn
 Apelles, Zanzis, sholde werche in veyn
 Outher to grave, or peynte, or forge, or bette,
 If they presumed me to countrefete.

(9–18)

Nature denounces the “counterfeiting” of human craft in comparison with her capacity to generate animate creatures. Human art, on this view, is fundamentally imitative; moreover, it is ontologically dependent on an original in the natural order and hence is ontologically derivative as well. This view splits off the higher world of invisible, spiritual realities that generate Nature’s own forms from their phenomenal, earthly imitations that, by their distance from the original, are several times removed from divine truth. Nature’s speech allows Chaucer to refocus the exemplum on the moral questions surrounding natural mimesis rather than familial dysfunction or Roman politics. Critics have rightfully noted that the problem of imitation that lies at the heart of Nature’s speech, which decries the possibility of copying, also lies at the heart of the father-daughter story, which dramatizes the destruction of a copy (Virginia) by its original (Virginius). Anne Middleton argues that Nature’s disquisition at the outset can be linked to the exemplum that follows because both fine art and sexual generation are about creating copies: “both artist and parent generate images, to which they contribute certain material accidents, but they are at best secondary creators; their images receive the spark of life, and whatever autonomous essence they have, from a higher authority.”⁷⁷ Middleton is correct to note the ontological difference between art and nature that was discussed by both popular poets and scholastics. This ontological difference, implicit in the *Physician’s Tale*, is spelled out in his source for this passage, Nature’s monologue in Jean de Meun’s continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*.⁷⁸ Jean’s Nature likewise distinguishes between the “fourmes veroies” of Nature and those of Art “qui ne fet pas fourmes si vaires” (who cannot make forms as true), including among her list of “copyists” the artists Pygmalion, Zeuxis, and Apelles, the same examples marshaled by the Physician’s Nature.⁷⁹ Jean’s Nature points out the physical division underlying the aesthetic one; while Art can copy scenes of everyday life in paintings, carvings, or sculptures, “ne les fera par eus aler, / vivre, mouvoir, santir, paler” (she cannot make them move by themselves, live, move, feel, or speak).⁸⁰ Incapable of endowing things with self-motion, Art remains an inferior power.

Significantly, Nature does not just say that mimesis is inferior; she says that it is impossible. Who can copy nature? No one, according to Nature. Even as the Physician’s Nature argues for an absolute division between

human copy and natural original, there was an alternate model available to Chaucer, one found in Aristotelian natural philosophy that argued for a more porous boundary between the two. While Aristotle recognized that natural things contained their own sources of motion as opposed to things created by human artifice that took their motion from an external source (the idea of the object in the creator's mind), he also posited a shared purposiveness, since each works toward a determined end.⁸¹ Aquinas's commentary on the *Physics* elaborates that nature is an inherent and mutual predisposition of matter and form, what Aquinas calls the *potentia naturalis*.⁸² Unlike, say, an acorn becoming an oak tree, any given piece of marble is no more predisposed to become Michaelangelo's *David* than any other. Michaelangelo's *David* is art rather than nature, since it is the sculptor's knowledge (an exterior force) that propels it toward its final form rather than an inherent impulse. Once in motion, the end-directed process of forming the sculpture, however, is largely the same as that of the oak. Beyond the origin of their motion, art and nature were both seen as goaloriented processes—albeit one intrinsic and one extrinsic—that were potentially continuous. It is no coincidence that Aristotle's discussion of natural causality in the *Physics* is explicated by analogy with the human art of bronze sculpting. This shared sense of purposiveness led Aristotle to remark that nature is like “a doctor doctoring himself.”⁸³ Sometimes this analogy was reversed, as we see in the thirteenth-century natural philosopher Roger Bacon, who claimed that, while nature was powerful and awesome (*potens sit et mirabilis*) far greater was “art using nature as its instrument” (*ars utens natura pro instrumento*).⁸⁴ In both these comparisons, we see an established sympathy between art and nature, *techne* and *physis*, between what the narrator of the *Parliament of Fowls* would have called “craft” and “lyf.” In its late medieval context, the acerbic denigration of human art voiced by the Physician's Nature would thus stand as a Neoplatonic provocation to an educated fourteenth-century reader: Are art and nature really as opposed as Nature here suggests? And, if so, what are the imagined consequences of this rupture?

Aesthetically, the stakes of asserting such a complete division between the two were comparatively high for Chaucer as a poet. If they are as opposed as the Physician's Nature claims, poetry as art—an “impossible” imitation—would have little moral purchase. The Physician potentially destabilizes the very art practiced by both himself and Chaucer: as a defective representation, poetry could be seen to trade in mere shadows of reality, devoid of substantive moral and epistemic value. This mimetic danger has the potential to contaminate the exemplum that follows as well: Can the story of the beautiful Virginia, whose worthy life is compared to a book wherein can be read “every good word or dede / That longeth to a mayden virtuous” (108–9), teach the Physician, much less his reader or listener, anything at all? Chaucer's retelling of the Virginia exemplum, like

the tale's opening personification of Nature, is obsessed with the potential agency of the copy, its ability to manufacture an ethics without recourse to an original.

Rather than simply affirming Nature's view that a chasm separates the artificial and the natural, I argue, Chaucer tests out what the effects of such an indelible division would be, effects that are not just aesthetic but philosophical. The theological implications of this view of mimesis become apparent in the next part of Nature's speech, where she addresses the subject of her own creative powers in relation to those of God:

For He that is the formere principal
Hath makid me his vicaire general,
To forme and peynten erthely creaturis
Right as me list, and ech thyng in my cure is
Under the moone, that may wane and waxe,
And for my werk right no thyng wol I axe;
My lord and I been ful of oon accord.
I made hire to the worshipe of my lord;
So do I alle myne othere creatures,
What colour that they han or what figures.”
Thus semeth me that Nature wolde seye.

(19–29)

As in Alan of Lille, Nature emphasizes her privileged position as the divine “vicaire general” subject to God who is “formere principal.” While she acknowledges her subordinate position, this acknowledgment exists in tension with her simultaneous assertion that she creates according to her own contingent will, “right as me list.”

To fully understand the import of this speech, it is necessary to read Nature's account of her relation to God's productive powers here against similar accounts in the work of previous vernacular poets whom Chaucer knew and translated, Jean de Meun and Guillaume de Deguileville. Such a comparison suggests that the Physician's Nature sees her powers as nearly coextensive with those of God. Unlike Alan of Lille's Nature who took pains to emphasize her own inferior imitative powers with respect to a divine original, the Physician's Nature seems more concerned with emphasizing their shared powers, asserting that she is “of oon accord” with God, a claim that suggests an identity between the powers of God and Nature.⁸⁵ Such an assertion is also at odds with Jean de Meun's allegorized Nature, who takes pains to emphasize her exclusion from the circle of Christian revelation, noting that her powers are as nothing in the face of Christ's incarnation.⁸⁶ Finally, Nature's assertion of her complete control over the sublunary realm in the *Physician's Tale*—“ech thyng in my cure is / Under the moone”—can be compared with the same claim made by the personified Nature in Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*.⁸⁷ In that earlier fourteenth-

century work, these were fighting words: when Nature boasts that all sublunary things fall in her domain, including the elements, animals, plants, and humans, she is immediately reprimanded by Grace Dieu, a representative of God's omnipotence, who reminds Nature that it is actually she who controls the earthly realm and is free to perform miracles and other "unnatural" acts of sacramental grace (such as the burning bush or the Eucharist) there whenever she chooses. Grace Dieu stresses that Nature's powers are different in kind, and not just in degree, from divine ones. The Physician's Nature, on the other hand, is allowed to assert her own creative power without correction or even the usual brackets and caveats about divine originals and omnipotence. In this way, Nature's assessment of the contingency of her own will and the originary nature of her creative powers echoes those already voiced by the Physician who ascribes Virginia's generation to the "sovereign diligence" of Nature.

The Physician's Nature sees herself less as the handmaiden of God or as a secondary cause (as in Aristotelian natural philosophy) and more as a supernatural partner. In short, she wishes to conflate her powers with those of the prime mover. In representing herself as a sublime original that frustrates all forms of human representation, the Physician's Nature exaggerates the chasm between mankind and the spiritual, the aporia at the heart of what it means to be human and unable to participate directly in the divine plan except through Nature's mediations. The agonistic relation between nature and art, however, masks a deeper asymmetry, the one between God's originary power as "former principal" and Nature's derivative powers as "vicaire general." Nature's claim to originary status in relation to the human is rendered less convincing because she herself is open to the charge of "counterfeiting" in relation to a transcendent original, a subsidiary status that previous allegorized Natures repeatedly acknowledged and highlighted. The Physician's Nature seems lacking in this particular self-knowledge and the potential infinite regress of creative mimesis goes unacknowledged by her. Unlike Deguileville's Grace Dieu who had implied that the only true artist was God, Chaucer's Nature suggests that the only true artist is Nature herself.

Just as Nature's disavowal of her own imitative status in relation to the creative powers of God suggests a theological impropriety, so too Virginius's actions illustrate a potentially tragic shortcoming in a voluntarist model of the will that sees human free choice as imitating God's power to do whatever he chooses whenever he likes. If Nature's speech raises the problem of aesthetic mimesis (art imitating nature) and theological mimesis (her own disavowed imitation of God's originary powers), the tale itself raises yet another, related problem of theological mimesis: How stable is a model of human volitional mimicry that claims the absolute freedom of the divine will as its original? Within the exemplum itself, the most proximate regulatory impulse is not Nature *in propria persona* but Virginius, who

assumes her authority. Just like the Physician who presumes to ventriloquize Nature at the beginning of the tale, Virginius speaks in the voice of natural necessity when he justifies Virginia's doom. His claim to be acting according to necessity, however, is undermined by Virginia's insistence that he acts freely according to his will. As in the case of Nature at the poem's opening, we are shown a disparity between what a character believes about the origin of his or her own moral authority and where that authority actually resides. Just as the Physician claims a privileged status for nature as original, Virginius asserts a similar originary privilege in relation to his daughter Virginia. Yet how authoritative is the privilege claimed by Nature and, consequently, by fathers? The tale seems to suggest that its instability lies in the problem of iterability in which copies necessarily involve their originals. Copies have a tendency to muddy the process of signification by suggesting multiple competing referents for the same idea. This potential confusion is heightened when the material world is being made to signify for potentially conflicting immaterial values. In the case of Nature's speech at the tale's outset, Nature cannot prove that her creative powers are originary with respect to God's formal originals. Virginius, faced with the scheming Claudius's corrupt suit, cannot prove that Virginia is his daughter and not Claudius's kidnapped servant. The dangers posed by copies to their originals are amplified when proof can only be inductive rather than demonstrative. Nature authoritatively denounces Art as mere imitation, yet Virginius must kill his daughter because he cannot prove that she is his own, even though her name attests her status as his genetic copy. Virginia, as a derivative copy—Art to Virginius's Nature—can only acquire moral authority after her death. Her authenticity arises only from her ability to be sacrificed. Unlike the formel eagle in the *Parliament of Fowls*, Virginia must be deprived of "free eleccioun" precisely because her dead body must be made the material sign of two immaterial ideas that are otherwise unprovable: her corpse is the material proof of both Apius's illicit sexual desire as well as Virginius's paternity and natural fatherly love. Such difficulties in signification reveal the potential arbitrariness that underlies systems of so-called "natural" order. This is the real problem that the copy poses for the original and that Art poses for Nature: in both cases, the former destabilizes the claims to authenticity of the latter. The tyranny of mimesis (like the tyranny of fathers) masks a deep anxiety about the status of the original.

It is important to note that none of the late medieval retellings of the Virginia story (including Chaucer's) asks the reader to determine whether it is right or wrong of Virginius to kill his daughter. While of great interest to modern critics, the question was apparently a medieval moral nonstarter. Instead, they each ask a variation on a different question: what philosophical system licenses Virginia's death? Chaucer's version frames this question in terms of, on the one hand, a personified Nature and, on the other, the Physician's invocation of a contingent deity whose actions lie beyond

human ways of knowing: Is it really Nature, in “oon accord” with this unknowable and omnipotent God, who alibis the demand for virginity? Or is it human free will that is being “naturalized?” The *Physician’s Tale* imagines the potential costs of using natural law to license human behavior, because it implicitly aligns the contingency of Nature with the contingency of God, and by extension, with the contingent “wyl” (identified by Virginia) of Virginius himself. In so doing, Chaucer questions whether or not any moral norms can be guaranteed through recourse to natural example (the position assumed by Alan of Lille, challenged by Jean de Meun, and flat out refuted by Guillaume de Deguileville). The *Physician’s Tale* demonstrates the potentially tragic outcome of human attempts to appropriate Nature’s authority to certify human custom, the patriarchal assumption that familial honor demands female sacrifice. The tale implies a necessary hierarchy of orders that all stand in analogous relation to one another: divine, natural, human, familial. These are, in Glenn Burger’s words, “a series of transcendental metaphoric substitutions: Virginia stands in for Virginius, Virginius for Nature, Nature for ‘my lord’ God, copy for original.”⁸⁸ And yet Virginia’s disturbing death—Chaucer intentionally heightens those aspects that make it morally difficult to countenance—suggests that there is a problem with this chain of command and the analogies that authorize it. The terms in the binaries of Nature-God and human will–divine will that should remain functionally distinct from one another have been reimagined as identical. When the Physician’s Nature asserts that she is “oon” with God, when Virginius acts as if he has an omnipotent will, then moral chaos is the result in the human realm.

The instability at the heart of Chaucer’s exemplum is in part the legacy of trying to reconcile the dictates of a Greek science that sees the human, like the natural, as guided by inclinations that are at base physical and material with a Christian moral context, here supplied by the Physician’s own moralizing at the tale’s end, that emphasizes an Augustinian separation of earthly and divine. Once justice (in the form of Apius’s prison suicide) and grace (in the form of Claudius’s sentence commuted from hanging to exile) are enacted by the putatively merciful Virginius, the Physician concludes with his own authoritative exhortation to his listeners: “Heere may men seen how synne hath his merite” (277). The Physician’s interpretation intentionally focuses on how Apius’s sin, rather than Virginia’s virtue, is rewarded. In the Physician’s view, the moral of his story is not about earthly justice (as it was in Jeun de Meun and Gower) but the unknowability of divine providence:

Beth war, for no man woot whom god wol smyte
 In no degree, ne in which manere wyse

.....

For be he lewed man, or ellis lered,

He noot how soone that he shal been afered.

(277–78, 283–84)

The lesson here is that God's omnipotence takes precedence over all merely earthly things, a divine power that was notably absent in both Nature's initial speech and in the pagan setting of the exemplum. To make this point, the Physician's explication typologically equates God's "smiting" of the unsuspecting Christian with Virginius's "smiting off" the head of his guiltless daughter. This analogy requires the audience to consider Virginius's contingent behavior with regard to his daughter as a type for God's contingent behavior toward his creatures, a comparison that installs a potentially distasteful and narratively unstable analogy at the heart of Chaucer's exemplum.

Critics have offered divergent interpretations of the Physician's assessment of his tale's "sentence," since it seems to fit with neither the exemplum itself nor his own earlier assertion that it illustrates the punishment of sin. This seeming incongruity has led some critics to conclude that the Physician is just a bad reader of his own tale.⁸⁹ But what if the Physician is actually correct? What if the real lesson of the exemplum is that, once you imagine a complete rupture between the human and divine realms or the human and the natural, all kinds of morally distasteful events can be naturalized under the sign of a contingent and ultimately unknowable God?

If the Physician is wrong about the implications of his tale, then so are many late medieval voluntarists who argue that God's omnipotence is the primary and determining feature of the human ontological condition and also a type for the autonomy of the human will from nature. Like voluntarists, the Physician's assessment emphasizes not just the epistemological but the ontological divide between God and his creation. It also echoes Nature's own confident assessment of the unbridgeable rift between man on the one side and the supernatural powers of of nature and the divine on the other. In this way, the *Physician's Tale*, like the *Parliament of Fowls*, is a provocative philosophical meditation on what role is left for nature in a voluntarist world. Scholastics such as Nicholas of Cusa "had recognized the dangers of voluntarism, because a voluntarist conception of God emphasized the distance between God, who was entirely free to create the world out of an infinite number of possibilities, and his creation, leaving no possibility for men to discover the meaningful ratio behind the cosmos."⁹⁰ The *Physician's Tale* is part of this conversation about what happens when human free will is seen to be analogous with the contingency of the divine will, when God's absolute powers are emphasized to the exclusion of his ordained power as expressed in Nature's order. In this historical context, the events depicted in the *Physician's Tale* would have been philosophically troubling not just from a modern perspective but from an Aristotelian one as

well. The *Physician's Tale* is a cautionary exemplum not just against presuming to know God's mind (as the Physician himself argues) or against the murdering of daughters (as many modern critics would have it) but also against the dangers of aestheticizing nature, representing it as an autonomous force divorced from human will and behavior but one that can be used as a warrant for such behaviors in the last instance.

In the moment that Virginius holds his daughter's head aloft in the courtroom, he also sacrifices any pretension of a benignly transcendent Nature: instead, we see that Nature's demand for her own authority results in an ethical detachment of the human from the natural world. This separation, the logical extension of a world in which ethical values are always located elsewhere, originals always at a spiritual remove from their copies, results in the severing of the moral from the natural, a detachment literalized in the gruesome tableau of Virginia's severed head.

For Chaucer, Virginia's fate may teach us another lesson: beware of how people use nature to license their worldview. If both Virginius and the Physician present cautionary lessons in this regard, so too does the Host (Harry Bailly), who voices his own opinion of what caused Virginia's death after the tale's end. While the Physician suggests that his tale teaches us about the uncertainty that attends the exercise of divine power, the Host suggests an altogether different moral:

Allas, to deere boughte she beautee!
Wherfore I seye al day that men may see
That yiftes of Fortune and of Nature
Been cause of deeth to many a creature.
Hire beutee was hire deth, I dar wel sayn.
(293–97)

Unlike the Physician and Nature herself who had sought to align Nature's powers with those of God, the Host aligns Nature with Fortune, the workings of "hap" in the sensible world. In doing so, the Host demotes Nature's "sovereyn diligence" to sublunary change, the constant mutability that we see around us. On this view, it is Virginia's natural endowments that drew Apius to her and thus led to her demise. The idea of a quasi-active (rather than passive) object exerting a pull on the desiring subject was one of the principles of Aristotelian cognition. Scholastic writers applied the optical theory of intromission—the passage of visual data into the eye from an outside object—to the realm of psychology and the passions when they argued that things can have an effect on their viewers. For instance, it is not that the wolf, upon seeing the sheep, desires it, but that the sheep, being seen, exerts a quasi-magnetic pull on the wolf. In the scholastic example, the putative patient is actually the agent. The causality implicit in the Host's assessment is a physical one that privileges earthly inclinations over the metaphysical vengeance posited by the Physician. Yet the Host's invocation

of Fortune and Nature together sows the seeds of potential philosophical confusion if he means to equate the two. In what ways are they alike? In this tale, they seem to share a common contingency. To blame Virginia's beauty, a "gift" of both Fortune and Nature, is a way of blaming an order beyond the human, though not immediately divine, for a human decision made by Virginius. The "gift" of Virginia's death is, according to Virginia herself, given not by chance or destiny or nature but by her own father.

The Host's view of the tale's moral is yet one more example of the human penchant to scapegoat nature for acts of human free will. On the Host's view, it is the child herself, endowed with Nature's gifts, that legitimates child sacrifice. Given this moral sensibility, it is unlikely that Chaucer intended us to agree with the Host, to understand the moral of this troubling tale as simply the "folly of man's reliance upon the gifts of Nature," in one critic's words.⁹¹ Such a reading would reproduce the Neoplatonic stance that separates the sensible world from the divine, one that, as I have been arguing, the poem puts forward in order to critique. Instead, the Host's comments draw attention to the discrepancy between the classical tale and the Christian virtues it claims to espouse. The conflicting interpretations offered first by the Physician and then by the Host point to the difficulty of extracting a unitary "sentence" from the "book" of Virginia's exemplarity. In refusing a clear and simple moral, frustrating our desire to read the girl's dead body as an open book, the *Physician's Tale* offers a larger truth about the difficulty of determining what belongs to nature, and hence by proxy to the divine order, and what to the human.

Speaking for Nature, Then and Now

As Raymond Williams observes, nature is "perhaps the most complex word in the language," because it is made to license many competing ideologies, not all of which can be true at any one time.⁹² Both the *Parliament of Fowls* and the *Physician's Tale* demonstrate the consequences of this predicament in their respective personifications of Nature. In each poem, Chaucer assumes the voice of a didactic Lady Nature to demonstrate the conflicting claims made in her name by his characters, whether quarreling birds, Roman pagans, or medieval physicians. However, there were also dangers attendant on speaking in Nature's voice for the poet himself, dangers that the ethical poet had to weigh against the great poetic potential offered by using this established literary topos.

One reason that Chaucer was drawn to the personification over the course of his career was that it allowed him to participate in an already lively poetic conversation about what Nature could or could not license. Alan of Lille's *De planctu naturae* had employed the goddess to regulate all forms of sexuality. As both *procreatrix* and *pronuba*, she was an aspirational

exemplar for a fallen humanity that would, in its ideal state, look to her laws as a model for married love. If, in Alan, Nature and her companion Genius were the gatekeepers of this married chastity, Jean de Meun would rewrite these figures in his continuation of the *Roman de la Rose* in order to demonstrate the tension between Nature as a guarantor of the human moral order and Genius, “master of places,” as a figure for an intrinsic sexual impulse capable of disrupting that moral order. As I argue in [Chapter 3](#), Jean’s poem transformed personified Lady Nature into a topos from which a writer could argue about the respective claims of contingency—human free will completely unfettered—and necessity—the Aristotelian inclination that governs the rest of the earthly and celestial worlds. If Alan of Lille had used Lady Nature to lament the human refusal to conform to an inherent inclination that would (in Alan’s view) lead to marriage, Jean demonstrates an altogether different outcome when humans follow natural laws of inclination: such drives lead, not toward married love, but toward reproduction at any cost, an erotic anarchy whose moral contradictions are explored in full and (porno)graphic detail. The *Rose*’s Nature becomes the mouthpiece for a late thirteenth-century orthodox position that saw the human will as completely autonomous from external influences even as such pressures were acknowledged to animate the physical body that housed it. On this reading, Jean intends to highlight the potential danger of separating human will from biological ends, Nature from Genius, marriage from sex. Emphasizing the contingency of Nature, Jean’s poem dramatizes what happens when sexuality is unharnessed from an embodied disposition to the good.

Among those who found Jean’s vision of Nature poetically generative but morally abhorrent was the fourteenth-century religious allegorist Guillaume de Deguileville, who revises Jean’s erotic dream vision into a spiritual pilgrimage. Deguileville’s *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* represents the human will as autonomous from material constraints, independent from biological imperative in all cases. In so doing, Deguileville downgrades Lady Nature from divine deputy to obstructive factotum. As I argue in [Chapter 4](#), Deguileville responds to Jean’s theologically provocative vision by simply reducing Nature to the vagaries of earthly mutability, a role that gives her negligible sway in the human world. Nature is rendered obsolete by cordoning her off from a human will informed solely by divine grace and therefore spiritually autonomous from the physical world that surrounds it. Deguileville’s representation suggests that Nature, far from a place to argue over what makes the human legitimately human (as she was for Jean) was instead largely redundant in a Christian salvational scheme whose defining feature was faith rather than reason. Nature’s lordship is an illusion, since it is actually God who gives things their essence, their beings. At best, Nature is a puppet whose strings are pulled by God; at worst, she is a figure for heterodox self-deception, a misguided belief that natural philosophy could

ever be autonomous from theology. Nature's formidable, if flawed, moral authority is shifted onto the broad shoulders of the poet, whose allegorical practices, now severed from even a semiotic relation to the physical world, assume the moral mantle and normative function formerly worn by a personified Nature.

Chaucer's own poetic experiments in personifying Nature speak back to these earlier poetic visions, sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly. While Chaucer's debt to Alan of Lille and Jean de Meun has long been acknowledged and discussed, it is also important to recognize the influence of Guillaume de Deguileville, a poet whom Chaucer read and translated.⁹³ While not as conspicuous as Chaucer's debts to Alan of Lille and Jean de Meun, Chaucer's use of Deguileville serves as a hidden transcript behind Chaucer's vision of a personified Nature, both because Deguileville was the writer who wrestled most strenuously with Jean's poetic legacy in the first half of the fourteenth century and because his poem offers an alternate vision of what an allegorized Nature could look like. Like Deguileville, Chaucer was interested in the problem of conflating God and Nature; however, the later poet was not as optimistic as his predecessor that the two could be so easily disaggregated. What Chaucer inherits from Jean de Meun and Deguileville are the terms through which Nature's workings are deemed either necessary or contingent, a disjunction on which the autonomy of the human will depends. Chaucer's response to these conflicting philosophical visions of Nature's influence is not to discount Nature's powers in the wholesale fashion of Deguileville, but, like Jean, to dramatize the dangers attendant on separating volition and inclination.

The *Parliament of Fowls* and the *Physician's Tale* show us what happens when humans are given a free pass from their animal inclinations: when erotic love is governed purely by the will, nothing remains to ensure that we will reproduce at all, and, when familial love is shown to be a choice rather than an inclination, children can be killed to satisfy their parents' ethical convictions. In the *Parliament*, the formel's ostensibly inherent desire to mate is willingly, some would say willfully, deferred. In the *Physician's Tale*, the assumption of an inherent parental compulsion to preserve its offspring is shown to be inoperative. In both cases, social behaviors assumed to be guaranteed by Nature are shown to be no longer covered by her warranty. Both poems ask what happens when the continuum between animal and human inclination gets disrupted, and, ultimately, both suggest that following Nature's precarious dictates results not in unchecked sensuality (as Jean de Meun had hypothesized in the preceding century) but in a potentially damaging abstinence. The real danger of suspending Nature's rule may not be too much sex, but too little. There is nothing left to guarantee natural behavior—the urge to reproduce, the urge to protect one's offspring—when inherent drives are shown to be optional. For Chaucer, Nature can no longer act as surety for married chastity (as she did in Alan)

nor can her contingent operations in the human realm be effectively separated from the Genius-inspired, biological imperative to reproduction (as in Jean de Meun). Moreover, her powers cannot be considered redundant (the view of Guillaume de Deguileville) in a world where her “gifts” are the efficient cause of Virginia’s death.

Chaucer’s distinctive exploration of Nature’s authority demanded particular generic forms: it is significant that his natural experiments had to be performed in the poetic laboratories of the beast fable and pagan antiquity. These were “whilom” places where the line between the human and the natural could be tested outside of the strictures of a religious orthodoxy that was still debating the effects of the absolute contingency of God’s will and, in its wake, the contingency of the human will. In terms of Chaucerian aesthetics, birds in the *Parliament of Fowls* function much as the pagans do in the *Physician’s Tale* (as well as in poems such as *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *House of Fame*). They are topoi from which the poet can address philosophical questions whose answers might otherwise be circumscribed by transcendent affirmations of a will autonomous from all physical inclination. The generic freedom of operating outside of late medieval theological constraints allows Chaucer to imagine a novel “solution” to the conflict between inclination and free will, one unthought by either Jean de Meun or Guillaume de Deguileville: absolute contingency of choice results in the annulment of all inclination. Given the ability to choose any of her suitors, Chaucer’s formel eagle elects not to choose at all; given leave to exercise absolute patriarchal authority, Virginius acts against a natural inclination to preserve his likeness and instead annihilates it. The *Parliament’s* birds and the *Physician’s* pagans speak here the socially unspeakable, the philosophical incoherence of an idea of nature that sees the physical world as inclined but only up to a certain, arbitrary point. The primary problem for Chaucer was not human misuse of the will, but the human desire to force nature into a regulatory mode that is untenable in a transcendent worldview that had already severed the material from the immaterial, the earthly from the spiritual. The drive to naturalize putatively “natural” inclinations demands the sacrifice of something, whether a normative idea of Nature’s order or a virginal girl. This is the moral price of separating the human world of morals from the physics of inclination, an experiment that Chaucer felt comfortable undertaking only in the laboratories of the animal and the pagan.

Finally, personifying nature allows Chaucer to comment self-reflexively on a problem that is at once literary and more widely philosophical: what is the ethical import of a human speaking in the voice of a nonhuman creature or force? “Ethicism,” according to the philosopher Iain Hamilton Grant, is generally purchased “at the cost of the elimination of nature.”⁹⁴ Grant diagnoses the post-Romantic condition as one in which human morality is habitually segregated from the material world, moral philosophy cut off

from physics. In such a world, to speak for Nature is effectively to silence her. This raises the question: When Chaucer speaks through a nonhuman voice—whether that of a bird or of Nature herself—is the nonhuman effectively silenced in the construction of the human ethical meditation? Does Chaucer eliminate nature in the act of representing it?

It is this very type of “speaking for” that much recent critical animal theory has passionately resisted. Rosi Braidotti argues that we should always reject the human habit of approaching animals through metaphor, for abandoning such analogies in favor of a “neoliteral” approach that would, according to Braidotti, foster a “deep bioegalitarianism, a recognition that we humans and animals are in this together.” While Braidotti acknowledges that the bestiary metaphor has a long and storied literary history “from Livy to Dante, from Molière to Kafka,” she admonishes us to leave behind this comparative habit, to acknowledge that “animals are no longer the signifying system that props up humans’ selfprojections and moral aspirations. Nor are they the keepers of the gates between species.”⁹⁵ The idea that animal metaphor has played a normative (and indeed coercive) role in the past is perhaps unarguable, and the sentiment that such reductive rhetoric should be disavowed is to be warmly affirmed. However, I would argue that Braidotti’s working assumption here—that the ventriloquizing of the nonhuman is always necessarily reductive—is open to challenge, at least in the case of Chaucer’s poetry.

Chaucer and other medieval poets who personified Nature’s powers struggled with the question of how nature either licensed or did not license human ethics, and this struggle sometimes amplifies the costs of speaking for the other. When Chaucer’s Physician concludes Nature’s monologue and interrupts his own tale to aver, “thus semeth me that Nature wolde seye,” we are reminded that what we are watching is a ventriloquizing of Nature, precisely the type that Nature insists is impossible. This interjection calls to mind a similar moment in the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue*, where Dame Alice, invoking the beast fable where a lion looking at an image of a man killing a ferocious-looking lion, asks rhetorically: “Who peyntede the leon, tel me who?” (692). Questioning who has control of the representation of women, the Wife of Bath appears to be unveiling the bookish misogyny of old clerks, and yet this “unveiling” is itself the ventriloquizing of a female voice by the male clerkly voice of Chaucer or his narrator. This same representational Möbius strip is in evidence in the opening of the *Physician’s Tale*. The Physician’s ventriloquizing of Nature is itself “counterfeiting” of the sort denounced by Nature, one that spotlights the problem of creative authenticity whether in nature or in art.

These meta-mimetic moments suggest an awareness on Chaucer’s part of the potential dangers of speaking in the voice of the nonhuman other, whether it is the painting of lions, the privilege claimed by the Physician’s Nature to “peynten erthely creatureis / Right as me list” (21–22), or

Chaucer's own painting of nature in both the *Parliament* and the *Physician's Tale*. The ethical stakes of this infinite representational regress are most evident in the bestiary world of the *Parliament of Fowls*. What is really striking about the *Parliament's* thought experiment is that Chaucer uses birds in human drag to ask the question: Are humans really just animals in rational drag? Are our sexual desires determined or free? It is this chiasmic species relation that heightens the philosophical stakes of the physics of the will as it is dramatized here. The "what if" of the human is licensed not by animal alterity but by the animal uncanny. The *Parliament of Fowls* does not presume animal autonomy, however. No posthumanist, Chaucer was committed to the hierarchical version of the *scala naturae* accepted by most of his contemporaries. Yet the *Parliament* also seeks to understand the potentially determinate nature of instinct in humans by appealing to a shared instinct in other animals. The animal here is not reduced to mute exemplarity as is often the case in the bestiaries discussed by Dorothy Yamamoto and others.⁹⁶ Since both the *Parliament's* narrator and the formel lack the inherent "prikke" or stimulus of inclination, the poem opens up a space that is not just outside of nature but also outside of the dichotomy of human and nonhuman. As Susan Crane notes in her discussion of the female peregrine of the *Squire's Tale*, Chaucer's noble and sorrowful bird is "not simply human within and animal without," but rather comes to be a site for a model of cross-species compassion.⁹⁷ In Chaucer, the animal fantasy is not just a suspension of Nature's laws but a blurring of boundaries among ontological categories. In the *Parliament*, ethics are not just tested in the material world but are shown to be forged subject to its pressures as well; the poet-narrator can, after all, imagine himself as a rock and subject to rocklike natural motions. In this way, the *Parliament of Fowls* entertains a view of nature that does not willy-nilly anthropomorphize rocks and birds, but rather participates, in the philosopher Graham Harman's words, in the project of "morphing the human realm into a variant of the inanimate" in order to examine the effects of shared being.⁹⁸

Ethicism, for Chaucer, is not ultimately purchased at the cost of eliminating nature; instead, a true ethicism, he insists, must unite spiritual values with the human *and* the nonhuman. Even as he acknowledges that there are dangers in speaking for the other—just look at those male clerics and their lions or the Physician and Virginius with Lady Nature—he also suggests that the benefits outweigh the risks. Personification is the main instrument in Chaucer's poetic laboratory, the tool that allows him to fabricate an ethical optics that sees the human from the nonhuman perspective, whether that perspective is a bird, a magnetized piece of iron, natural inclination personified, or even God's providential vision.

The conversation about Nature's powers in which Chaucer participates does not end with him but will continue on well into the next century. The succeeding decades, however, would not bring further radical

experimentation regarding the reach of Nature's authority and the possibility that things could "always be otherwise." In an intellectual atmosphere that had begun to associate Aristotelian modes of rationalism with Lollard heretics, Chaucer's poetic heirs were more straightened, less willing to craft their own poetic thought experiments in which to test the limits of naturalism, but would instead look back to those of earlier medieval poets as vehicles for continuing this still urgent conversation.

CHAPTER 6

with its discussions of elemental compounds and physiognomy, flourished in the fifteenth rather than the fourteenth century, and they took their place alongside a growing number of agricultural treatises, technical recipe books, and craft manuals on such topics as metallurgy and glassmaking. There was a particular interest in texts dealing with alchemy and astrology, fields that modern historians label “occult” sciences but that medieval writers would have viewed as “applied.”

Various reasons have been adduced for this shift, including the effects of the Black Plague and the growing alienation of English university culture from its Parisian counterpart due to the Hundred Years’ War.⁵ The more commonly cited thesis is that inquiries into heterodox views at Oxford and elsewhere in the wake of Wyclif dampened philosophical speculation across the board and led to limits on the freedom of the arts faculty to debate certain philosophical views. It is the case that Wyclif’s physical and metaphysical investigations were both premised on a realist foundation earlier championed by Merton figures such as Walter Burley and Bradwardine. J. M. Fletcher argues for a relatively direct correlation between this philosophical stance and the subsequent climate: “ecclesiastical suspicion that a knowledge of Wyclif’s realist views in philosophy would inevitably lead to an acceptance of his heretical views in theology eventually ensured a blanket mistrust of his works.”⁶ William J. Courtenay instead emphasizes that this shift was at once more gradual and less attributable to Wyclif alone. He charts instead a shift in academic style: traditional forms of university argument fell out of fashion—the *quaestio* mode of analysis and the biblical commentary—to be replaced with “a more evangelical style of writing; a greater concern with the practical and devotional,” a textual culture that Wyclif himself happened to exemplify.⁷

If, for a variety of reasons, natural philosophers at Oxford were less inclined to vigorous speculation on natural topics that might potentially impinge on theology, the theorization of nature’s powers continued to be explored in another textual community: the laboratory of dream vision poetry. This chapter asks: what happens to Nature’s voice at this moment when the academic study of natural philosophy is being reoriented to more practical concerns and, simultaneously, her secrets are being revealed more steadily in other English genres?

To answer this question, I look at two fifteenth-century literary translations attributed to John Lydgate, Benedictine monk and prolific writer in many genres. The complicated question of natural reason animates both *Reson and Sensuallyte* (ca. 1408–10), a version of the anonymous *Les Eschéz d’Amours* (The Chess Game of Love, ca. 1370s), and the *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* (1426), an English adaptation of Guillaume de Deguileville’s *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*, discussed in [Chapter 4](#). Both poems assert the unequivocal dominance of theology over natural philosophy and critique the ways in which Aristotelian physics had been applied to the construction of

ethical systems. These translations are, I will argue, a contribution to the ongoing debate over nature's potential role in structuring human ethical systems, a debate that was introduced into vernacular poetry by the allegorical figure of Nature found in Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*, but that was being reshaped by contemporary pressures on the academic study of the natural sciences.

These translations also provide insight into the "mirror" narratives of intellectual lassitude that have traditionally characterized the study of both fifteenth-century literature and science in Britain. Literature of this period has, in the past, been described as notoriously "dull," as lacking in generic innovation when compared with its fourteenth-century antecedents, the fallow period between Chaucer and the Renaissance. In attempting to refute this opinion, Derek Pearsall sums up the prevailing view of Hoccleve, Lydgate, and other poets who followed Chaucer: what we see in them is not aesthetic failure but "a change of temper" due to "a reassertion of orthodoxy"; these writers exemplify "moral earnestness, love of platitude and generalization, a sober preoccupation with practical and ethical issues," all traits that are, according to Pearsall, the recognizable hallmarks of early fifteenth-century literature.⁸ This assessment has been mitigated by the important work of scholars such as Andrew Galloway, Maura Nolan, and Robert Meyer-Lee among others, all of whom find modes of formal and generic innovation among Chaucer's followers. Notwithstanding the justice of the charge, this narrative of literary lassitude still reveals something about the temper of fifteenth-century English letters, particularly when read against a similar critical narrative found in the history of science. Fifteenth-century English natural philosophy is also usually considered a dull affair, in conspicuous decline from its fourteenth-century heyday, the heroic age of the realists and nominalists battling over how the world works. Edward Grant's *A History of Natural Philosophy* skips the fifteenth century entirely, without comment, while Robert Pasnau, in his important study *Metaphysical Themes, 1274–1671*, describes the chronological contours of the argument he outlines as taking "the rough shape of two plateaus divided by a trough," a trough that corresponds to the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.⁹ Rarely considered together, these narratives of literary and scientific desuetude are not coincidental, and, leaving aside for the moment the question of how accurate these accepted narratives may be in their details, reading them in counterpoint to one another suggests certain commonalities of modern reception. They also, I would suggest, point us to common historical anxieties shared between popular and learned circles as they grappled with the application of what, in English, was known as "kyndely reson" to questions of moral and spiritual certainty.

As a result of these debates, certain fourteenth-century thought experiments were no longer desirable or, in some cases, even possible in the subsequent English intellectual environment. It is not simply a mass

outbreak of dullness that explains why there is no fifteenth-century equivalent of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* (which imagined a nature independent of Aristotelian laws of physical inclination) or scientific theories such as Ockham's rejection of universals (whose consequences included an increased emphasis on the contingency of the divine will in relation to the created world). Fifteenth-century writers, whether poets or philosopher-theologians, would reckon the correct uses of natural reason in very different ways than their fourteenth-century predecessors had.

The translations considered here have only recently begun to be the focus of sustained critical attention. Their relative neglect is, in part, no doubt due to their perceived dullness, the "plodding explicitness" of Lydgate's translational practice.¹⁰ It is difficult to judge just how "plodding" the English translation actually is in either of these two cases in the absence of a viable exemplar. With the recent publication of a critical edition of the *Eschéz d'Amours* and an edition of the second recension of Deguileville's poem, we will soon no doubt be in a better position to judge this opinion.¹¹ That these works have received less attention than other Lydgate poems may also be due to the fact that Lydgate's authorship has been debated in both cases. Despite the fact that *Reson and Sensuallyte* appears in two fifteenth-century manuscripts that include Lydgate's other known works, it was ascribed to Lydgate only by the antiquarian John Stow (or Stowe) in the mid-sixteenth century.¹² Despite this lack of certain attribution, current critical consensus maintains that both *Reson* and the *Pilgrimage* are the work of Lydgate for a variety of formal and thematic reasons.¹³ In his discussion of *Reson and Sensuallyte*, James Simpson observes that the poem employs the meter (four-stress couplets) that Lydgate elsewhere uses when translating French octosyllabic couplets and that it evinces interpellations of what we might imagine as Lydgate's signature "antifeminist 'antiphrasim.'" ¹⁴ Moreover, the editor of *Reson* documents the many verbal echoes between the two poems, while the recent work of Stephanie Kamath has highlighted how both manuscript traditions share an apparatus of marginal Latin annotation that appears to be authorial.¹⁵ Such evidence suggests that, at the very least, both English poems are the work of the same translator, and, in the lack of compelling evidence to the contrary, my argument assumes that this poet is best identified as John Lydgate.

This chapter will argue that these translations deserve to be considered together for the important light that they shed on the problem of reason and nature in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, a problem with implications both theological and literary. Both translations engage in extended allegorizations of nature and, in doing so, open up a window on how naturalism would become increasingly associated with unorthodoxy in the period between Chaucer and Lydgate. The opening part of the chapter provides the social context in which these very different personifications of Nature can be read as an evolving response to the rationalization of nature

over the first quarter of the fifteenth century, a period in which concerns over orthodoxy impinge on vernacular textual production.

As Middle English translations of arguably the two most important fourteenth-century responses to Jean de Meun, these translations approach these theological concerns in the context of the ongoing *querelle de la Rose*, the oftentimes vituperative debate over Jean's ethical legacy. The chapter goes on to parse out how each translation in turn responds to these concerns. The earlier translation of the *Eschéz d'Amours* offers a more optimistic view of the possibilities of human reason, while the later translation of Deguileville is, like its source, less sanguine about these possibilities, demoting natural reason unceremoniously in favor of the totalizing power of grace. It is the distance between these two views of the human intellect at work that this chapter explores, a distance emblematic of the increasing difficulty of arguing for the transformative nature of reason as the fifteenth century progresses, whether within popular literature or in the arts faculty. Lydgate's translations are both deeply retrospective—looking back to popular French poems of the preceding century that were in themselves conservative responses to questions surrounding Nature's authority—as well as pressingly topical—his interpolations and revisions point to the continued relevance of these models for his fifteenth-century audience; together, they comprise an important and rarely discussed episode in the *querelle de la Rose*, one that reflects particularly English concerns about heterodoxy.

Jean de Meun is not the only literary genealogy with which these translations wrestle; *Reson and Sensuallyte* and the *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* are also part of Lydgate's ongoing attempts to negotiate his own poetic authority with respect to the literary influence of Chaucer. Just as Aristotelian science and its scholastic practitioners continued to generate difficult questions in academic circles, so too Chaucer's experiments with nature generated unease among a certain segment of his poetic followers. While some of Chaucer's earliest readers such as Thomas Usk had applauded and even borrowed from Chaucer's sympathetic hearing of natural philosophical attitudes, readers like Lydgate subscribed to a very different view. It is not just that Lydgate's response to the representational problems posed by nature is nostalgic and conservative, while Chaucer's was skeptically flexible. Debate over Aristotle's nature had become polarized again due to a fresh set of Wycliffite-inspired concerns that affected the reception of Aristotelian science and, as I have argued throughout this book, the representation of nature by poets interested in how the world potentially generates hermeneutic systems for understanding it. At the same time, by the first decade of the fifteenth century, the vernacular commentary tradition was inhibited by a "culture of repression," in the words of Alastair Minnis, inhospitable to a "mythographic treatise on the *Parliament of Fowls* of the type produced by Évrart de Conty, or a *querelle* over *Troilus and*

Criseyde.”¹⁶ This program of allegorical translations from the French is therefore less the result of the personal idiosyncrasies of a “classicizing monk” and more a coherent response to ongoing debates about how to represent the will in relation to its physical *dispositio* in vernacular poetry.

Taken together, these translations allow us to add “the relation of the human to the natural” to the long list of characteristically Lydgatean themes identified by previous critics, including the essence of right rule, public poetry as a vehicle for political critique, the role of the poet as an interpreter of the past, and the limits of exemplarity.¹⁷ What is more, they suggest that Lydgate was arguably the fifteenth-century English poet most interested in the moral authority of nature. In addressing this theme, Lydgate’s translations can be seen to witness the theological problem of nature in England after Wyclif as well as the literary problem of nature after Chaucer, especially since the allegorical Natures discussed below offer a corrective to those found in the earlier poet. When given the choice to follow Jean de Meun or Deguileville, Chaucer chose the former, while Lydgate the latter. This choice is significant, because it gives us not only retrospective insight into the “roads not taken” by Chaucer but also, and more important, it shows us how the literary landscape had changed by the time Lydgate was writing.

Natural Reason After Wyclif: Aristotle and Antichrist

Lydgate’s translations show a consistent interest in the extent to which reason was coextensive with the human cognition of the sensible world. Does our intellect lead us to truth or lead us astray? Both *Reson and Sensuallyte* and the *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* focus readerly attention on the ethical potential as well as the spiritual limits of the rational faculty. In the earlier translation, the dreamer must learn to follow the higher moral faculty of reason, leaving behind not just bodily temptation but the temptation to follow the promptings of the “vertu sensityf,” or the sensible soul responsible for earthly cognition. If the physiological and moral identities of reason are foregrounded in Lydgate’s earlier translation, the role of reason is also crucial to the later *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, where Reson is an allegorical character in her own right and where natural reason gets put on trial in the person of Aristotle. Like their sources, these translations test out earlier medieval assumptions about natural reason, asking to what extent they remain valid. As we have seen in earlier chapters, the Augustinian view largely opposed reason to faith, while the thirteenth-century Thomist account (following Aristotle) had argued for their fundamental compatibility.

Both *Reson and Sensuallyte* and the later *Pilgrimage* can be seen as commentaries on the status of natural reason and the specifically English reformist debates in which it had become embroiled by the opening of the

fifteenth century. By that time, appeals to natural reason had become unpalatable for many orthodox writers who associated Lollard sacramental views with naturalism and skeptical rationalism more generally. Even as Aristotle's rhetorical, ethical, and natural philosophical writings continued to constitute the basis of the arts curriculum, even as those who loudly criticized Aristotle's conclusions used his argumentative methods to put forward their own alternative models, the dangers of Aristotelian naturalism were revived through association with potentially heretical beliefs. Yet the Lollard attitude toward Aristotle and his natural philosophy was often equivocal when not outright hostile. In calling for the reform of the church, Lollard writers often deployed the language of Aristotelian inquiry familiar from the schools as the basis of their appeals, and, as Anne Hudson has shown, sometimes took their opponents to task for being ignorant of Aristotelian categories of predication.¹⁸ Despite such comments, Lollard writings also displayed a marked ambivalence toward the philosopher. The name "Aristotle" had become a partisan football in debates provoked by Wyclif beginning in earnest in the 1380s, debates that continued for several decades. During this time, it became customary to accuse one's religious opponent of being too "Aristotelian." As Rita Copeland, Fiona Somerset, Kantik Ghosh, and others have recently argued, Wycliffite writers had a complex relationship to the authorizing strategies characteristic of scholastic culture.¹⁹ This ambivalence marks Wyclif's attitude: he criticized Aristotle's ethical writings, though he maintained that the natural philosophical writings were useful for explaining scripture.²⁰ We find the same attitude in later Lollard writers, who often invoked the philosopher's authority, even as they simultaneously derided their orthodox opponents as hypocrites who preferred the "veyn pleies & corioustees" of Aristotelian logic to scripture.²¹

Though skeptical of some aspects of Aristotelian *scientiae*, Lollard sermon writers regularly called on Aristotelian scientific principles in order to clarify, through analogy, difficult matters of revelation such as the Resurrection or the Eucharist. This practice of comparing spiritual phenomena with earthly correlates is justified by one Lollard sermon writer because Christ himself "sekup þus by symylitude in kynde"; that is, Christ too argued from metaphors of natural likeness.²² The sermon writer then goes on to employ natural similitude in order to explain the nature of Christ's resurrected body, expounding on John 12:24–25: "Amen, amen I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal." Following Wyclif's Latin, the sermon writer grapples with the ontological continuity of Christ's essence between his human and his resurrected forms. In pursuing the analogy that Christ is himself comparable to the wheat kernel mentioned in the Gospel of John, the vernacular writer adds an interpretation not found in Wyclif's Latin, explaining the continuous

substance shared between the seed and fruit of a single plant in teleological terms derived ultimately from Aristotle's *Physics*:

Here mony clepyde philosophres glaueron dyuersely; but in
þis mater Godis lawe spekuþ þus, as dyden oolde clerkis, þat
þe substaunce of a body is byfore þat it be seed, and now
fruyt and now seed, and now qwyc and now deed. And þus
monye formes may be togydre in o þing and specially whan
þe partis of þat þing ben medled togydre.... And so boþe þese
accidentis, quantite and qualite, may dwellon in þe same
substaunce, al 3if it be chawngghed in kyndys, and þus þis
same þing, þat is now a whete corn, schal be deed and turne
to gras, and afturward to monye cornys. But varianunce in
wordis in þis mater falluþ to clerkys, and schewyng of
equiuocacion, þe whiche is more redy in Latyn.... And þus
spekuþ holy wryt and no man can disproue it. Errour of freris
in þis mater is not here to reherse, for it is ynow to telle how
þei erron in byleue.²³

After noting that seed genesis is a subject of contention based on the potential plurality of forms, the writer explains the view that a single substance may take many forms and that, though the accidents change, a single substance remains throughout. Interestingly, the passage critiques the various versions offered by “philosophers” who contradict one another and equivocate, an equivocation encouraged by the Latin in which they write. The passage ends by taking a potshot at certain mendicant orders, who have regrettably misunderstood Aristotle on the topic of how matter relates immanently to form.²⁴ For this Lollard writer, Aristotelian natural philosophy is not only a tool for explaining scripture to the laity, it has also become another dart in the quiver of antifraternat satire.

While it is difficult to generalize about differences in Aristotle's reception between orthodox and reforming writers (since he was embraced and renounced somewhat situationally), a clear division exists on the topic of the Eucharist. Lollard writers regularly appeal to Aristotelian physical arguments to critique transubstantiation, while orthodox writers reject strictly Aristotelian explanations as overly determinist.²⁵ Wyclif rejected the orthodox understanding of the sacrament in part on the basis that the idea of “accidents without substance”—the solution elaborated at length by Aquinas in the preceding century—violated the Aristotelian idea that perceptible qualities had to inhere in a subject. He also rejected the view of Duns Scotus and Ockham, who argued that the bread ceases to exist at the moment of consecration and that its accidents appear through an act of divine omnipotence. God would not, according to Wyclif, annihilate matter that he had created. For Wyclif, transubstantiation had to have a viable physical as well as metaphysical explanation, since earthly and spiritual

orders were necessarily compatible. Wyclif believed that, in Jeremy Catto's words, "the Eucharist was not some supernatural entity beyond the natural order, but must conform to the natural laws of being and coming into being."²⁶

While Wyclif's own view of the Eucharist was complex and shifted over time, there is a sustained emphasis on the need for a comprehensible "physics of the Eucharist" that could be explained to the laity. In vernacular treatises and sermon literature dating to the 1380s and 1390s, the Lollard view that accidents could not exist without a subject was often phrased in terms of what properly or "by kynde" belonged to the consecrated bread itself.²⁷ They claimed the authority of Christ's own words to assert that the host is God's body "al ȝif it be breed in his kynde"; some Wycliffite English writers even argued that, "þe sacrid oost is uery bred kyndly ant Goddis body figuraly, riȝt as Crist hymself seiþ."²⁸ The idea that the Eucharist is naturally ("by kind") bread but, sacramentally, God's body—a doctrine that would later come to be known as consubstantiation—was particularly noxious to orthodox writers and an avowed heresy. Yet Lollard writers continued to condemn those (usually described generically as "friars") whose belief necessitates the post-consecration Eucharistic wafer as "accidents without subject"; such a belief is judged to be "wars in kynde þenne is any lumpe of cleye, as clerkis knowen wele."²⁹ Recognized defenders of the faith responded to this more physicalized understanding of the sacrament by denouncing the Lollard view as being overly dependent on "kyndely reson" and, in particular, Aristotelian natural philosophy.

One of the clearest statements of this orthodox strain of anti-Aristotelianism in early fifteenth-century England is to be found in the Carthusian writer Nicholas Love's interpolations in his translation of the pseudo-Bonaventurean *Meditationes vitae Christi*, a passion meditation that has been described by its recent editor Michael G. Sargent as "one of the most well-read books in latemedieval England."³⁰ Kantik Ghosh observes that Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (1410) has a mixed attitude toward reason: it affirms the "reasonable ymaginacion" that allows a reader to identify with Christ's sufferings but condemns "kyndely reson," especially when applied to the sacraments.³¹ Love's ambivalence, I am arguing, can also be read as part of a wider mistrust of compatibilist theological models whose extended genealogy long predates the Lollard heresy; it is, moreover, one that some of his Lollard opponents share. In the brief treatise on the sacraments that was appended to his translation, Love deploys the conventional disparagement of Aristotle discussed in the second chapter, here associating it with the Lollards whom, he complains, prefer Aristotle to scripture:

we haue seene in oure dayes howe þe disciples of Anticrist
þat bene cleped Lollardes, hauen made mich dissension and

diuision in holy chirch, and putte many men in to errour of
 þis blessedde sacrament, by þe false doctrine of hir maistere
 [Wyclif] þe which þorh his grete clergy and kunnyng of
philosophye was deceyued in þat he 3af more credence to þe
 doctrine of Arestotele þat stant onely in *naturele reson* of man
 þan he dide to þe doctrine of holy chirch and the trewe
 doctours þerof touchynge þis precieuse sacrament. (*Mirror*, p.
 236, ll. 21–29; emphases mine)

Wyclif—“Antichrist”—is accused of giving more credence to Aristotle and natural philosophy (several times called simply “philosophye” and once glossed as “naturele science”) than he gave to the Bible; his Lollard followers—the disciples of Antichrist—are accused of spreading this philosophical doctrine.³² As if the casual reader were in danger of missing Love’s hostility to natural reason, a marginal gloss “Nota rationem” calls attention to one of the many passages that lament the Lollard inability to see that the Eucharist exists above the “comune course of kynde” (p. 226, ll. 2–3). It is worth noting that Love’s interpolations into his pseudo-Bonaventurean text are wholly consonant with the actual Bonaventure’s own antipathy toward what he saw as overdependence on Aristotelian ways of looking at the physical world, views discussed in preceding chapters.³³ For Love, however, it is not just reason in general, but the university reception of Aristotelian science, the organized study of nature as “philosophie” or “naturel science,” that has undermined sacramental doctrine:

For Aristotel techep as *kyndely reson* acordeþ þat þe
 accidentes of brede or wyne, þat is to sey þe colour, the
 sauour and so forth of oþer mowe not be bot in þe substance
 of brede or wyne after hir kynde. Bot þe doctryne of holy
 chirche is, þat in þis blessedde sacrament, by speciale myracle
 of god *aboue kynde*, þe colour þe sauour, and oþere accidentes
 of brede and wyne bene þere with out hir *kyndely subiecte*,
 þat is to sey without þe substance of brede and wyne, þat was
 byfore þe consecracioun.

And for als miche as þis doctryne of holy chirch is a3enus
þe principales of philosophie, þat is *naturele science*, þerfore þe
 forseide maister of Lollardes reprouede it and scornede it, and
 so he errede him self and made many oþere to erre touchinge
 þe byleue of þis holiest sacrament. (*Mirror*, p. 236, ll. 30–42;
 emphases mine)

Love does not attempt to disprove an Aristotelian critique of the Eucharist; rather, he summarizes it and then straightforwardly asserts that the church’s doctrine of accidents *sine subiecto* is “aboue kynde.” Love seeks to separate a reason subordinated to spiritual sight from the practices of university

natural philosophy, a rhetorical strategy that, I will argue below, we also find in Lydgate's translation of *Reson and Sensuallyte*.

For Love and other orthodox writers, seeing—as mere sensory cognition—is tantamount to unbelieving; sight subordinated to natural reason potentially opposes a faith that, as he argues elsewhere in his treatise, should instead be based on inner feeling. Critics have long discussed Love's text as a prime example of late medieval affective piety, a model that is constituted by dialectically rejecting sensory experience in favor of its spiritual predicate.³⁴ Love frequently contrasts knowledge gained through "kyndely reson" seen by "oure bodily eyene" with that "seene by trewe byleue in soule with oure gostly eyene" (p. 226, ll. 18–20). Love defines the application of a "kyndely reson" trained in Aristotelian natural philosophy as the opposite of the affective models of devotion that he advocates as the best way to approach Christian revelation. Citing Gregory the Great (p. 227, ll. 34–35: "Feiþ haþ none merite, to þe whiche mannus reson 3iueþ experience"), Love adapts a traditional patristic skepticism about reason with a very contemporary anxiety about the uses to which natural reason was currently being put in Lollard circles.³⁵

This anxiety over how "naturele science," or university Aristotelianism, was inflaming heterodox views of the Eucharist was specific to its late medieval English context. Contrasting the reception of Aristotle's natural science on the Continent, particularly in France, is instructive in this regard. In early fifteenth-century Britain, vernacular theology and philosophy were cause for anxiety in part on account of debate over Bible translation as the work of Margaret Aston, Nicholas Watson, and others has made clear.³⁶ In France, a full scriptural translation had been available from the end of the thirteenth century, and, while there was an evident ecclesiastical desire to control how scriptural material circulated and was interpreted, the *Bible du XIIIe siècle* never generated the theological difficulties that it did in England.³⁷ Likewise the royal court of Charles V was known for encouraging the translation of natural philosophical writings into French. In the 1370s, Nicole Oresme had undertaken a major program of vernacular translations of Aristotelian works including an innovative commentary on *De caelo*, ostensibly at royal request. This culture encouraged philosophical discussion of scriptural issues and bred a plurality of views on both Aristotle and his science.³⁸ It was not that the uses of natural reason were not a subject of debate in France: early fifteenth-century Paris was still embroiled in arguing over how language, logic, and reality were all related to one another, a conflict that pitted the *via antiqua*—the Thomist understanding, based on Aristotle's physical works, that found the sensible world to be largely intelligible—against the *via moderna*—the view associated with Ockham, Pierre d'Ailly, and Marsilius of Inghen, and their followers, who argued that what we know of this world is radically limited by the divine ability to change the perceptible order at any moment. And yet this debate was not a

priori connected to charges of religious heterodoxy, even as it generated conflicting interpretations of sacramental theology.³⁹

The English alignment of natural reason with heretical belief was only rarely echoed in France and on the continent more generally. It could even be argued that the opposite was the more likely scenario: that it was heretics who were condemned for not knowing their Aristotle well enough. In one late fifteenth-century Dominican source, a writer sympathetic to natural philosophical inquiry likens those who disdain Aristotelian reason to heretics. This view is unsurprising given that Dominicans frequently voiced support for a Thomist version of Aristotelianism in *vita* of the pagan philosopher as well as quodlibetal questions that debated Aristotle's potential salvation. The question of "Utrum Aristoteles sit salvatus"—whether Aristotle was saved—was usually answered in accordance with the writer's views on Aristotle's nature, as discussed in [Chapter 2](#). Fifteenth-century Dominicans argued that just as St. John the Baptist was Christ's forerunner in grace so too Aristotle was his forerunner in nature. In this tradition, a fifteenth-century version of Aristotle's life and death praises the philosopher as "legis naturae maximus doctor et inventor" (the discoverer and best teacher of the law of nature) and concludes by branding those who would grumble against Aristotle's nature as mere "Begardi et Lollardi."⁴⁰ This curious charge could mean simply that only beggars and vagrants speak against Aristotle, but it is more likely that it imputes this belief to the heretical sects of the Beguines and the Lollards. Such a charge essentially inverts the accusations regularly made by late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century English writers such as Love.

Even this brief sampling of late medieval controversy over natural reason suggests the instrumentality of many conflicting positions that were generated in relation to Aristotle's natural philosophy in late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century England. Lollards tarred their opponents alternately with neglecting Aristotle's true meaning or with following his logic chopping too enthusiastically. Their orthodox opponents, on the other hand, were largely united in their denunciation of the Greek philosopher and his science as well as the heretics who argued for the compatibility of nature and biblical truth on the basis of his writings. To be a follower of Aristotle's natural philosophy in late medieval England was thus the equivalent of being a "partisan" or an "ideologue" today; it was a term uniquely attributable to one's enemies, who were always more Aristotelian than oneself. While the uneasy alliance between Aristotle and the Antichrist Wyclif was solidified in debate over the Eucharist, it is important to see these debates as neither monolithic nor occurring purely within a theological setting that pitted orthodoxy against reformers. Instead, read in a diachronic philosophical context, they can be seen as a somewhat late episode in a conflict, ongoing from the thirteenth century, between the arts and theology faculties, a controversy that long predated the Lollard threat to

orthodoxy and that would outlast it. The late medieval English association of Aristotle with Lollardy suggests that wariness about natural reason could be found in many textual registers, academic and extra-academic (sermon literature, religious polemic, popular poetry, *quodlibeta*). Wherever it took place, the debate employed terms that were highly mobile, subject to strategic redeployment depending on the situation rather than attached to a particular ideological node. As in the modern adage about horseshoes and hand grenades, the charges of “Lollard” and “Aristotelian” could be assumed to hit their targets even when pitched with only a relative amount of accuracy.

Rationalizing Nature in *Reson and Sensuallyte*

It is this environment, one in which Lollardy, Aristotelian natural philosophy, and “kyndely reson” were all seen to be mutually constituting—or contaminating, depending on one’s perspective—in which we should read these two translations, works that both grapple with the status of nature and the human rational capacity to extrapolate from it. The opening decade of the fifteenth century, with its changing constellation of Aristotelian science, appeals to reason, and questions over religious orthodoxy saw the translation of the popular late fourteenth-century allegory *Les Eschéz d’Amours* into Middle English. While the title *Reson and Sensuallyte* was probably not authorial, it accurately reflects the shift in emphasis in the fragmentary English rendering.⁴¹ The opposition between the two terms was a common topos in medieval literature. In *De planctu naturae*, for instance, Alan of Lille had imagined this tension as symptomatic of the ways in which the human as microcosm participates in the macrocosm: “Et sicut contra ratam firmamenti volutionem motu contradictorio exercitus militat planetarum, sic in homine sensualitatis rationisque continua reperitur hostilitas” (And just as the army of the planets marches on a course contradictory to the fixed revolution of the firmament, so there is found in man an unceasing hostility between reason and sensuality).⁴² For Alan, the body rebels against the traces of the soul just as the wayward planets seek to free themselves from the yoke of cosmic harmony. And yet this opposition is understood differently after the full incorporation of Aristotelian science into the arts curriculum that took place over the course of the thirteenth century than it had been in the twelfth. While the Middle English “sensualite” connoted lust and corporeal pleasure as it does in both Modern and Middle English usage, its primary medieval meaning was a far more morally neutral one: it referred to the *sensus communis* of late scholastic psychology, the faculty of the sensitive soul in which sensory data was collated before it ascended to the intellective aspects of the soul where reason was located.⁴³ In Lydgate’s translation, “sensualite” refers less often to

carnality than to this sensory soul, the portal to the world that was found to be consistently regular in Aristotelian science but deemed unreliable (even dangerous) in an Augustinian worldview that emphasized inner illumination over physical cognition. *Reson and Sensuallyte* explores this opposition, less as a war between recalcitrant materiality and spiritual directive than as an intramental conflict between different faculties of the soul.

Like Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, *Reson and Sensuallyte* is intent on forging a model of reason that provides an alternative to the natural reason that had become associated with Wycliffite philosophical positions. The two works share much else in common. Like Love's *Mirror*, Lydgate's *Reson* is usually dated to around 1410, and just as Love's translation freely adapted and augmented his pseudo-Bonaventurean original in order to respond to contemporary theological controversy, so too, I will argue, Lydgate adapted his source to provide a model of rational nature independent of an academic natural philosophy that could potentially lead to dangerous skepticism.⁴⁴ Lydgate's translation, however, was much more optimistic about the powers of natural reason than Love's work. *Reson and Sensuallyte* sought to recuperate reason by aligning it with nature while divorcing it from natural philosophy, a *scientia* with which the poem associates a crude model of sensory observation as well as sexual inclination.

Lydgate's French source, the anonymous *Eschéz d'Amours*, is an allegorized meditation on the tension between the private pursuit of love and the call of public duties, an extended allegory of roughly thirty thousand lines framed around a game of chess. Written sometime in the 1370s, the *Eschéz d'Amours* was a popular work "designed for the entertainment and sociopolitical education of young courtiers," though it exists in only fragmentary form today.⁴⁵ A popular rewriting of both the dream vision genre and the *speculum principis*, the poem owes its subject matter and literary form to the *Roman de la Rose*, while its greatest philosophical debt is to Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum*, according to the poem's modern editors, Gregory Heyworth and Daniel E. O'Sullivan.⁴⁶ The *Eschéz* tells the familiar story of a narrator who ventures into the walled garden of the God of Love only to spy a fair lady in Narcissus's fountain. The lover-narrator then attempts to win the object of his desire in a game of chess; after his defeat, the goddess Pallas arrives to give him much unsolicited advice on conduct, diet, familial duties, and civic virtue. This advice manual takes up about two-thirds of the original work. Lydgate's version exists as a translation of only the initial part, breaking off before the beginning of the chess match proper and thus omitting the *Fürstenspiegel* altogether. While it seems unlikely that the translation's partial state is intentional, the resulting foreshortened poem focuses primarily on the dreamer's attempts to understand the sensory world around him through encounters with a series of allegorical and mythographic characters, notably Nature, Diana, and Venus. The partial nature of Lydgate's translation prevents a conclusive

discussion of the poet's ultimate intentions; however, the extant poem pursues a philosophical agenda that amplifies discussion of how man can and should use his reason to navigate the physical world. Lydgate's poem is a third longer than the comparable section of his French original, a conspicuous increase even when measured against Lydgate's usually prolix style of translation.⁴⁷ This amplification consistently undermines mere "sensory understanding"—*sensuallyte*—and instead shows how unvarnished nature gives us the tools to use our reason wisely.

Reson's personified Nature harks back to the cosmographical models of the twelfth century even as the poem's *ordinatio* encourages the educated reader to understand this depiction in the context of a contemporary academic Aristotelianism. Following the *Eschéz d'Amours*, Lydgate's Nature resurrects Alan of Lille's Nature busily forging earthly creatures from a heavenly formulary: on her robe can be seen an "exemplarie of ydeyes" that existed "ful longe afor or they weren wrought, / compassed in dyvyne thought" (360–62). In this Neoplatonic vision, Nature is the divine lieutenant, "vnder god the chefe goddesse ... to whom al thing must enclyne ... through purveance dyvyne" (256–60). The rhyming of "enclyne" with "dyvyne" emphasizes that Nature, as an agent of inclination, is the executor of a larger, explicitly providential plan; this model of providential inclination can be contrasted with that found in Chaucer's *House of Fame*, where "kyndely enclynynge," as it is called there, is understood as a purely physical principle. Similarly, *Reson's* Nature is "in al hir werkys ferme and stable, / And neuer founde variable" (344–45); she is eternal and unchanging like God himself, a static vision opposed to nature defined as a continual principle of change and end-directed growth found in Aristotle's *Physics*. The educated reader of *Reson and Sensuallyte* would be encouraged to make such comparisons, because the manuscript page highlights points of contact between this cosmological vision and the model of Aristotelian nature commonly taught in the late medieval arts curriculum. In Oxford, Bodleian MS Fairfax 16, for example, poetic references to the natural world are often glossed with appropriate sections of Aristotle's *libri naturales* or other works of natural history. Marginal Latin glosses refer readers at various points to works such as "philosophus book 2 celie et mundi" and "de mineralibus," respectively Aristotle's *On the Heavens* and a geological treatise attributed either to Albertus Magnus or to Aristotle himself.⁴⁸ Such glosses form a bridge between what might have been perceived as the somewhat old-fashioned Neoplatonic vision of Nature described in the text and a contemporary Aristotelian natural philosophy, the recognizable intellectual currency of its day. In juxtaposing the two, the text expects its educated reader to understand that its cosmographical Nature is not just a bout of naive nostalgia but an informed choice on the author's part. The manuscript tradition of *Reson and Sensuallyte* thus heightens the effect of Lydgate's self-conscious return to an earlier idea of the natural world, one with a clearly

deictic relationship to the moral realm.

While *Reson and Sensuallyte* inherits its cosmological model of nature from the *Eschéz d'Amours*, Lydgate's amplifications foreground Nature's separation from the academic practices of natural philosophy and the attendant dangers of a too "kyndely" reason. Lydgate's translation follows the main outlines of its source's plot: once out in the world, the dreamer must choose between the competing moral visions of Venus and Diana. When the dreamer announces his intention of visiting Venus's Garden of Pleasure ("jardin de déduit"), Diana discourages him by reminding him of the many examples of bitterness brought about by love. She issues a counterinvitation: Why not abandon Venus's pleasures and instead enter my Garden of Chastity? The callow dreamer demurs, claiming that he cannot possibly lock himself away in the Garden of Chastity, since no less of an authority than Nature herself had earlier ordered him to go out and see the world. In the *Eschéz*, the dreamer, attempting to placate Diana, says that he merely wants to see the world as Nature had urged him, to experience for himself, "le ciel et le monde / Et la grant mer aussy parfonde" (the heavens and the earth / and the broad sea so deep; ll. 3555–56). In the English translation, however, the lover's desire is specified with details that convert general wanderlust into a textual trip through the *libri naturales*:

But I desire the knowleching
Of the hevene and his mevyng,
And also of the salte see,
And eke what thing yt myghte be,
Why the flood, as clerkys telle,
Folweth with hys wawes felle,
And after that the ebbys sone
Folweth the concours of the Mone,
The reson out I wolde fynde
After the course oonly of kynde.

(4611–20)

This is a poetic enumeration of the "order of things" as taught in the core of the arts curriculum based on texts such as Aristotle's *De caelo* (the study of celestial motion) and *De meteorologica* (the ebb and flow of tides). To the dreamer's academic pronouncement that he will follow "reson ... after the course oonly of kynde," Diana acerbically remarks that this is not what Nature had told him to do at all; Nature had instructed him to use his reason well and here "well" means deploying it spiritually rather than sensually, according to a providential understanding rather than only according to "kynde." It is the academic quantification of natural knowledge ("as clerkys telle") that is suspect here, not Nature herself.

The dangers of this mode of viewing nature are spelled out in another early fifteenth-century translation. In the Middle English version of Alain

Chartier's *Traite de l'Esperance* (ca. 1420), a work modeled on Boethius's *Consolatio*, the allegorical character Faith reproves those who desire to "discourir also the myxtion of destenyres; embrace thordir of the causis, the noumbre of the effectis, the mesure of tyme to the conclusions of their endis; and [then] dispute ayeinst the Maker which hath their ordinaunce registird in the booke of His secretes."⁴⁹ The language of measurement and rational specification characteristic of Aristotelian modes of quantification and causation are shown to be the heretical tools of those who would inappropriately use them to pry into divine secrets. In order to align reason with a moralized nature, both must be separated from the academic practices of natural philosophy that seek to parse the material world into ever finer slices in an attempt to gain empirical knowledge, knowledge that *Reson and Sensuallyte* suggests is mere worldly vanity. One does not look *at* nature; rather, one looks through it to discern the absolute moral values that exist elsewhere.

If the dangers of attempting to use reason "after the course oonly of kynde" were not sufficiently clear from Diana's speech to the dreamer, a similar message is embedded in Venus's Garden of Pleasure itself. This garden is a virtual copy of that voluptuously idle space depicted in the *Roman de la Rose*, a text that the *Reson* narrator claims to have read but, as James Simpson points out, from which he apparently learns nothing and is therefore doomed to repeat its narrator's many excesses and ethical failures.⁵⁰ One way in which this later *hortus conclusus* differs from its literary prototype is that it explicitly emblemizes the dangers of a hermeneutics associated with natural philosophical practice. When Venus invites the dreamer to join her "college" (2692), she is at once asking him to indulge in a sensual way of life and asking him to look at the world through the eyes of the arts master rather than the theologian. It is this epistemological difference that Lydgate's translation repeatedly highlights. Diana warns the lover against many of the stock dangers that beset the romance hero in such a garden: the sirens, wild animals, poisonous springs, and perilous beds that regularly populate the genre. But perhaps the most insidious threat of all is that what you see in Deduit's garden is not what you get. The trees, which appear green and flourishing to the eye, are actually vile and corrupt within. In an addition to his source, Lydgate points out the hermeneutic danger posed to the unwary by the deceptively delicious-looking fruit of these trees:

Faire withoute, but corumpable
They be wythin, who taste aryght,
Contrarye even to the syght,
Fresh by demonstracion,
But ful of fals corrupcion
They be stuffed by the kore.

These lines contrast the deficiencies of the external senses with the ability to “taste” something correctly with the inner wit. The scholastic term “demonstracion,” the practice of determining specific properties from observed general characteristics, is here rhymed with “corruption” to highlight the misprision that inevitably results from this mode of inquiry. Despite Diana’s warnings, however, the lover persists in his unnuanced faith in sensory cognition and parrots the scholastic rhetoric associated with it. He desires to “make a prefe” (4734) of Venus’s garden for himself:

I thynk for to make assay,
For the conceyt of my reson
Contraryieth your oppinion.
(4736–38)

Lydgate again adds language to his original that associates the dreamer’s conspicuous reliance on his reason with the formal structure of the scholastic question *ad oppositum* (“contraryieth your oppinion”).⁵² This scholastic language of proof and assay recalls that other unreconstructed naturalist, the eagle guide of Chaucer’s *House of Fame*, who repeatedly affirms the necessity of “proof by experience” as a way of understanding how sound moves to Fame’s palace. Unlike Chaucer’s humorously pedantic eagle, *Reson*’s dream narrator will pay the moral costs for desiring empirical proof as well as for following “the conceyt of [his] reson.”

The careful reader, unlike the poem’s dull-witted dreamer, should already have been prepared to tackle the sensual dangers of Venus’s spooky trees. Nature had already introduced the pith/bark dichotomy to the dreamer at the poem’s outset, when she explained how reason works. Comparing these two uses of the same metaphor suggests why the poem proposes an unreconstructed commitment to a twelfth-century version of integumental allegory as its preferred antidote to particularly fifteenth-century concerns over the dangers of “kyndly reson.” An argument in favor of integumental allegory arises from a Neoplatonic understanding of the process of cognition, an understanding outlined in Nature’s discussion of the natural powers of the soul. The poet argues that only man’s intellective soul allows him access to the physical world, an ability that sets him apart from other animals:

Knowynge through hys dignite
Many thinges that be secre;
Wher sensityf, this is certeyn,
Is in knowynge but foreyn,
As of the barke which is withoute
For-derked with a maner doute,

Of thinges which by accident
Ne ben but out-warde (but) apparent,
And ne kan no ferther wyne
To know the prevy pith withynne.
(731–40)⁵³

The sensitive soul can only cognize the outer “bark” of appearances. Knowledge is separate from sensory data, since things cannot be known “by accident,” that is, according to their outward properties. Instead, it is the independent operation of the intellective soul that allows apprehension through the joint operations of reason and understanding. While this passage follows its French original fairly closely, Lydgate introduces an opposition between the outer and the inner senses: man attains knowledge of the cosmos not through external cognition but through “his secret ynwarde syght” (755). Lydgate’s addition emphasizes knowledge production as a recognizably Augustinian form of inner illumination, rather than a Thomist idea of the agent intellect as a necessary faculty of the soul. Just as the sensitive soul can be deluded in its looking so too can the naive dreamer who proposes to look at the natural world solely through the powers of induction.

A rhetorical commonplace, the idea of separating out the inner kernel of meaning from the surface husk resonated with a long-standing tradition of scholastic scriptural exegesis, familiar from twelfth-century writers such as William of Conches.⁵⁴ It is also characteristic of the cosmological view of Nature that saw the natural world as merely symptomatic of a divine meaning located elsewhere, as we saw in Hugh of St. Victor’s reading of the Book of Nature in [Chapter 1](#). Moreover, this interior-exterior manifold had become a rationale for allegorical poetry itself. Boccaccio in his *Genealogie deorum gentilium* (ca. 1350–60) argues along similar lines that poetry, while authorized by its ethical effects, may hide its spiritual insights under its figurative language and formal properties. Boccaccio goes even further: he argues that even pagan poets can be considered to have written “sacred theology” (*sacre theologie*) because stories can simultaneously contain historical truths, facts about observable natural phenomena, as well as moral and spiritual truths. For Boccaccio, the ethical truths sometimes expressed in the physical allegory of the ancients were tied together in a way that made it difficult to tease apart.⁵⁵ Lydgate, by contrast, argues that the physical language in which such truths are clothed is disposable. The later English poet uses the tree metaphor to distinguish between the natural philosopher, who only sees the bark, and the poet, whose penetrative poetic vision reveals that which is inaccessible to mere sensual analysis. The poet, rather than the natural philosopher, is the authorized interpreter of a symptomatic physical world. It should also be noted that, in addition to being a rationale for the poet’s chosen vehicle of integumental allegory in *Reson and*

Sensuallyte, the pith/bark analogy is elevated to a hermeneutic principle arising from the poem's *ordinatio*. The vernacular verse—the bark—is regularly glossed with a Latin “pith” that reveals its true moral meaning. The Latin apparatus often points to the ways in which the surface meaning of the vernacular poem, its “sweet looks,” are deceiving. For example, an extended paean to women's constancy, one that seemingly refutes stereotypical antifeminist views of women's inconstancy, is glossed with Juvenal's antifeminist views as well as the tags “per antifrasm” and “per contrarium,” lest the reader should miss the poet's ironic tone (6164–202). Tellingly, neither the antifeminist passage nor its gloss finds an analogue in the corresponding part of the *Eschéz*; the antifeminism would seem to be the work of the English translator and glossator, a pattern that continues in this section of the poem.⁵⁶ Much as the heedless narrator could potentially be deceived by the trees in Venus's garden, the unwary or unlearned reader lacking Latin could be deceived by the poem itself.

Like Nicholas Love's *Mirror, Reson and Sensuallyte* warns its readers against the dangers of an Aristotelian natural reason that could lead the unwary into sin or even doctrinal error. For Love, reason was not to be used by the layman to parse the things of this world in themselves; instead, reason's role in Love's affective piety was confined to showing mankind how the visible things of this world, those things “þat man kyndly knoweþ,” could stir up a love of spiritual things, those “þat he kyndly knoweþ not” (p. 10, ll. 36–39). Spiritual truth is not immanent in the things of this world; rather, visible things point abstractly to a felt truth that exists beyond the phenomenal realm and is accessible only to the soul, never to the eyes. Like Love, Lydgate's translation emphasizes the dangers of looking at nature without wearing the moralized lenses of spiritual truth. To do so risks seeing only the bark and not the pith, since truth is “contrarye even to the syght.” These affirmations of what seem to be a traditional Neoplatonic, Augustinian truism—that surfaces have only deictic value—is given a new interpretive urgency in the first decade of the fifteenth century by the Wycliffite desire to read surfaces, particularly the surface of the sacrament, with Aristotelian eyes. Like Love, the *Reson* author mistrusts Aristotelian ways of looking at the natural world. However, unlike Love's *Mirror, Reson and Sensuallyte* explicitly wishes to preserve Nature herself as a moral force whose authority aids rather than hinders the true understanding of the physical world. One needs the help not just of reason, but of a spiritual guide, the poet, to benefit from it. In this way, Lydgate's theory of nature is also his theory of poetry, his vision of the material world an inherently aesthetic not just aestheticizing one. Lydgate differs from his source to the extent that his translation seeks to elevate poetry above the disciplinary practice of natural philosophy, affirming that the tongue of the poet, rather than the eye of the natural philosopher, is the more reliable instrument of ethical transformation.

Reson in Its Textual Communities

Reson and Sensuallyte stands in the center of several related textual communities, and exploring each in turn makes clear the importance of this relatively neglected Middle English translation. It is simultaneously a reworking of the *Eschéz d'Amours* for an early fifteenth-century English audience, an intervention in the long-running *querelle de la Rose*, and, finally, a response to Chaucer's more proximate, and poetically fraught, experiments with personified Nature.

Lydgate's distinction between poetry and natural philosophy comes into clearer focus when compared with another nearly contemporaneous response to the *Eschéz* known as *Le livre des Eschez amoureux moralisés* (ca. 1400). This commentary is attributed to Évrart de Conty, a member of the faculty of medicine at the University of Paris and the translator of Aristotle's *Problemata* into French.⁵⁷ His poem provides a narrative gloss on the mythographic and natural philosophical aspects of the *Eschéz*, in effect producing, in the words of one of the commentary's several modern editors, "un manuel des sept arts libéraux."⁵⁸ Évrart produces an encyclopedic treatise, one of whose primary purposes is to elaborate principles of Aristotelian science where relevant to the poem's moral purpose; within this work is a long section on the principles of Aristotelian natural philosophy.⁵⁹ This section begins by elaborating on the definition of nature as change and then moves on to summarize the highlights of Aristotle's *Physics*, including the four causes, the relation of matter to form, the difference between nature and fortune, the six types of natural movements, place and its properties, and the qualities of measured time. These *topoi*, many familiar from the encyclopedic tradition, frequently emphasize a Thomist compatibility between Aristotelian science and orthodox ecclesiastical teaching. God is here imagined as both final cause and as prime mover; his order, Nature's necessity; Aristotle, the earthly witness to this divine order: "Et ainsy le tesmoigne Aristote et prouve en sa philosophie ou il nous aprend oultre qu'il est indivisibles et impartibles et sanz aucune corporelle grandeur, et quil est infinis et perdurable" (And thus Aristotle bears witness to it and proves it in his philosophy in which he tells us moreover that [God] is indivisible, cannot be divided, and lacks any bodily form, and that [God] is infinite and eternal; p. 227).

Évrart's version of the *Eschéz* emphasizes what allegory and natural philosophy, poet and philosopher, have in common. Unlike Lydgate's self-conscious embrace of a moralized allegory that works to exclude the encyclopedic hermeneutics of Aristotelian natural philosophy, Évrart's commentary integrates mythographic explication with comprehensive discussions of astronomy, music, and physics. This combination is not just another example of the well-known medieval fondness for encyclopedism. Évrart believes that poetry is licensed by its resemblance to certain aspects

of the physical world, a doctrine of likeness that renders poetry congenial to its hearers. Citing Aristotle, Évrart enunciates a theory of poetry that organically links literary practice to the rest of the cosmos; the metrical form of poetry, with its patterns of rhyme and measured feet, are analogous to the regular intervals characteristic of celestial music, a similarity that makes it congenial to the human soul. According to Évrart, the *Eschéz* poet, like his classical models, uses the form of verse “car en rime et en mectre est la parole assise et mesuree par musical mesure, c’est a dire par nombres ressamblables a ceulx dont les consonances musicaulx despendent, en laquelle musical consonance se delite moult l’ame humaine naturelement, come Aristote dit ailleurs” (because, in rhyme and meter, speech is disposed and ordered by musical measurement—that is to say, through its resemblance to the numbers on which musical harmonies depend—a pleasing arrangement in which the human soul naturally delights, as Aristotle says elsewhere; p. 3). Poetic form is sanctioned as an ethical vehicle through its likeness to the cosmic form, both of which naturally delight the human soul with their movements. Offering Aristotle as his authority, Évrart argues that poetry is effective and pleasing since it can be formally quantified, like music, a characteristic it shares with a natural world amenable to similar division. The commentary’s extended accounts of the natural sciences (astronomy, music, physics) are not, in Évrart’s view, digressions from the *Eschéz*, since physical description and mythographic allegory both serve to reinforce the original poet’s moral message.⁶⁰ Nor is his introduction of hundreds of references to Aristotle, easily the most frequently mentioned personage in his text other than Venus. Évrart finds the Christian poet and Aristotle, allegory and natural science, to be compatible, even congenial.

Évrart’s *Livre des Eschez amoureux moralisés* is significantly more enthusiastic about the possible synthesis between Aristotelian natural philosophy and Christian moral message than either *Reson and Sensuallyte* or their common French original. Whereas Évrart’s moralizing commentary often elaborates on the poem’s descriptions of the natural world and its sensible workings, highlighting the overlap between the poem’s mythography and the material of the *libri naturales*, the *Eschéz d’Amours* and *Reson and Sensuallyte* are more hesitant about the possibilities offered by Greek science. When Aristotle is mentioned by name in the Middle English poem and its French source—which happens only twice—it is with an eye toward showing how insufficient an academic approach to the natural world truly is. In the poem’s opening description of Nature’s marvelous forging, the narrator concludes that it is impossible to describe her, since, though she was quite ancient, she looked quite young. This paradox means

That no man koude nor myght anon
 NOMBRE hir yeres euerychon,
 Nor covnte hem alle in hys devys,

Nature, an enigma to human sense perception, is beyond the epistemological reaches of Greek philosophy. The narrator's hostility to a natural philosophy that seeks to number and count the natural world foreshadows Diana's attitude toward the naively empiricist narrator who desires to examine the sensible world through demonstration: both poet and goddess mistrust the idea that Nature's works can be subjected to strategies of descriptive enumeration. Perhaps most familiar from Nature's description in the *Roman de la Rose*, the indescribability topos is put to different uses in *Reson and Sensuallyte*.⁶¹ In the *Rose*, all representational arts—whether science, painting, sculpture, or the narrator's own poetry—were found lacking, all conspicuously failing to capture Nature's elusive essence. In *Reson and Sensuallyte*, by contrast, it is only philosophical description of nature that is an explicit mimetic failure. In the *Rose*, the opposition between Art and Nature appears complete, while, in Lydgate, the narrator will attempt to forge an alliance between Nature and didactic poetry as a privileged representational art capable of attaining to spiritual truth. For the *Eschéz* author, as for Lydgate, looking at nature without a guide will not lead you to spiritual truths; however, aestheticizing it—understanding it symptomatically—has the potential to set one on the correct path.

Beyond its immediate response to its French original, *Reson and Sensuallyte* can also be seen as pressingly topical insofar as it is Lydgate's own contribution to the early fifteenth-century *querelle de la Rose*, a literary debate that had been particularly vitriolic in the decade prior to Lydgate's translation of the *Eschéz*. As discussed at the end of [Chapter 4](#), writers such as Christine de Pisan and Jean Gerson opposed Jean de Meun's naturalism among his other moral and literary trespasses, a critique compatible with that found in Lydgate. As in his source, the (presumably) unreliable narrator of *Reson and Sensuallyte* praises the *Rose* as peerless. According to the narrator, there is no work "so worthy of renoun / to spekyn of philosophie nor of profounde poetrie" (4854–56). It was this alliance between "philosophie"—specifically natural philosophy—and poetry that, I have been arguing, was challenged in the wider context of Lydgate's translation.⁶²

In translating the *Eschéz*, Lydgate chose a text that had already forged an alliance between the "pith" of didactic poetry and a redeemed Nature, and his decision to translate the poem can be read as his salvo in the popular poetic conversation about nature as sexual governor begun in Jean de Meun's half of the *Roman de la Rose* and continued in those fourteenth-century writers who responded to it, including Guillaume de Deguileville and Chaucer. Lydgate's poem realigns a moralized right reason with Nature, concepts that Jean de Meun's *Rose* and certain of his followers had split apart. In *Reson*, as in its source, there is no ambivalence about Nature's

moral authority; she “hath noon errour in hir werkes” (4694). This epithet comes from the Aristotelian commentary of Averroës, an attribution made in the Venice manuscript of the *Eschéz d’Amours*, where the marginal gloss reads “¶ quia dirigitur ab intelligencia non errante.”⁶³ Unlike Jean—who had undermined Nature’s moral message through its antifeminist messenger—and Deguileville—who had depicted Nature as a loathly lady whose power was not just limited but redundant in the face of God’s grace—the *Eschéz* and its Middle English translation affirm the infallibility of a Nature understood to be under the direct providential governance of God.

As an antidote to these earlier personifications of Nature, it is fitting that the Nature of the *Eschéz* and of *Reson and Sensuallyte* is a particular type of infallible Nature, one denatured of all sensuality and therefore an ideal antidote to a Venus who represents the unrestrained power of natural sexual inclination. Chastity is the purifying element capable of precipitating a hermeneutically viable human reason out of the draft of Venusian sensuality. In *Reson and Sensuallyte*, reason can lead to truth but only once the academic middleman of natural philosophy and the pernicious carnal influence of Venus have been excluded. In his attempt to reunite these entities, Lydgate goes even further than Alan of Lille had, suggesting that the will is naturally inclined to chastity rather than to married love, the triumphant joining of Hymen and Genius that marks the climax of Alan’s *De planctu naturae*. In its unquestioned championing of chastity, Lydgate’s project has much in common with another fifteenth-century text of the *querelle*, Jean Gerson’s “Traictie d’une vision faite contre Le Ronmant de la rose” (1402), insofar as both speak, not just in the voice of Nature, but also in the voice of Chastity in order to repudiate potentially theologically damaging interpretations of nature.⁶⁴ In Gerson’s dream vision, the figure of Chastity complains against the Fol Amoureux, a sophisticated rake revealed to be none other than Jean de Meun himself. Equally skeptical of Jean’s rhetorical and moral project, both poems attempt to defend reason with an appeal to abstinence in the forms of, respectively, Lydgate’s Diana and Gerson’s Christianized allegory of Chastity, who explicitly protest Jean’s treatment of Lady Reason. At the behest of the assembled court, Gerson’s “Eloquence Theologienne” takes up Chastity’s defense, arguing against immorality, promiscuity, vulgarity, and, inter alia, natural determinism. Moreover, his defense offers a correct accounting of classical philosophy, asserting that, even before the incarnation of Christ, classical philosophers such as Cicero had reproved a model of rationalism that would result in indecency. Like Lydgate’s *Eschéz* translation, Gerson tries to disaggregate “good” reason that leads to spiritual truths from “bad” reason that was overly concerned with the physical, arguing that in this regard, “norreture ... vaint nature” (good custom ... prevails over nature).⁶⁵ In both Gerson and Lydgate’s *Reson*, Nature cannot represent natural sexual inclination because this part of her late medieval identity has been partitioned off and attributed to Venus.

Beyond its important contribution to the *querelle, Reson and Sensuallyte* also speaks directly to Lydgate's literary inheritance in the form of Chaucer's vision of nature and inclination as imagined in his *Parliament of Fowls*. There, Venus appears fleetingly as a scantily clad apparition in Love's garden, her appearance more like a prurient carnival side show than a credible threat to Nature's dominion. The far graver danger in Chaucer's poem appears only when the natural inclinations usually associated with Venus go unheeded. In refusing to answer Venus's call to mate, both the narrator and the formel eagle challenge the rule of reason and Nature's sovereignty. In the *Physician's Tale*, patristic affirmations of the value of virginity are used to authorize child sacrifice, a morally troubling alliance that, in Chaucer's version alone, is underwritten by an imperious Lady Nature who reaffirms the distance between the human and the natural worlds. In both poems, Chaucer suggests that the problem is not too much sex, but rather too many problematic appeals to chastity and virginity. By contrast, Lydgate's translation of the *Eschéz* seeks to restore virginity as an ethical tool aligned with both reason and nature in Middle English.

The most significant difference between the models of nature offered by Chaucer and by Lydgate, however, is where to assign the blame when things, as they inevitably do, go wrong. Lydgate's version places this blame squarely on the human misuse of will, demonstrating that the lover, like the rest of humanity, is always more apt to choose Venus over Diana, bodily pleasures over spiritual truths. Chaucer, as we saw in the preceding chapter, makes a very different diagnosis. He suggests that the problem may lie not in the human misuse of will (as the transcendent model suggests) but in the ways that humans attempt to claim an ambivalent position in relation to Nature, asserting that they are subject to certain teleological processes of becoming (such as humoral and planetary dispositions) but exempt from others (the end-directed drive toward sex and reproduction). Chaucer's poems suggest that the desire to accommodate or preserve chastity by claiming it as a natural imperative can be just as dangerous as unchecked natural inclination. Whereas Chaucer had questioned the medieval habit of making Lady Nature act as alibi for human sexual mores (whether promiscuity, married love, or chastity), Lydgate seeks to restore an essentially exemplary relation between Nature and the human in *Reson and Sensuallyte*, one that allowed a rationalized Nature to act as a reproductive and moral comptroller. Whereas Chaucer's Nature has only a subjunctive relationship to reason—"if I were Resoun"—Lydgate's Nature has no difficulty in speaking authoritatively as Reason.

If Chaucer's response to the problem of nature in the *Parliament of Fowls* was to pursue the most extreme cases as limit tests for the various models of nature offered by university-trained theologians, Lydgate's response in *Reson and Sensuallyte* could be termed a recuperative rather than speculative undertaking. Again, this was not just a matter of a monastic temperament

congenial to a nostalgic view of nature but rather a conscious aesthetic choice that embodied Lydgate's philosophical commitments as well as his desire to negotiate with his Chaucerian literary inheritance. Just as Lydgate attempted to "correct" Chaucer's vision of the classical past in works such as the *Troy Book* and the *Siege of Thebes*, so too *Reson and Sensuallyte* "corrects" the *Parliament of Fowls*' vision of an unstable, contingent Lady Nature, an allegorical figure whose actions raise questions about a voluntarist deity at work in the created world.

Reson and Sensuallyte thus attempts to repair reason, which, in fifteenth-century England, was not only the deficient term in the age-old faith-reason binary but one that, over the course of the three decades prior to Lydgate's translation, had become associated with a rationalist or naturalist critique of sacramental culture. In Lydgate's translation, reason is not opposed to faith but is, rather, its underpinning. At the same time, the poet warns his readers to guard against the dark side of reason that would subject the will to the teleological motions of "kynde," a version of reason implicitly promoted in much Aristotelian natural philosophy, flirted with in the naturalism of the *Roman de la Rose*, and ultimately condemned by Nicholas Love and other fifteenth-century English theologians who saw it as a tool of heretics. Yet this apparent confidence that reason could be "de-natured" of mere sensuality, that nature could be "de-sensualized," disappears in his later translation of Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*, an alternative, and much darker, response to Jean de Meun's Nature.

Reviving Deguileville: *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*

While any discussion of motivation with respect to why a medieval translator chooses to render a particular text into English must remain conjectural, given the social realities of patronage and the serendipitous vagaries of how exemplars traveled, Lydgate's choice of the *Eschéz d'Amours* is an intriguing one in light of his later decision to translate Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*, a poem that, as I argue in [Chapter 4](#), takes particular aim at Jean de Meun's equivocal vision of the claims of natural necessity. Taken together, these translations can be read as statement, simultaneously literary and theological, on the problems of human sexuality and determinism that were also at the heart of the ongoing *querelle de la Rose*. More than a decade after the appearance of *Reson and Sensuallyte*, Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* is translated into Middle English verse with a prologue attributing it to Lydgate. Whereas Lydgate's earlier poem offers a sanguine view of the benign moral authority of Nature, his *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, like its source, is much more pessimistic concerning the possibilities of reason,

nature, and Aristotelian physics, all topics that required more sensitive treatment in the wake of an increasing institutional response to Lollardy on the part of both church and state. In this English context, Deguileville's poem was made newly topical again.

The *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* was already a popular and influential work with readership in both England and France as well as elsewhere in Europe. As Marco Nievergelt and Stephanie A. V. G. Kamath have noted in their introduction to a recent collection of essays on Deguileville's pilgrimage trilogy, the poem's popularity is attested by almost eighty surviving manuscripts.⁶⁶ By the fifteenth-century, Deguileville's poem was already widely read in England and had influenced writers such as Chaucer and Langland; however, it was only translated into English in the 1420s and 1430s. The verse translation contains a prologue noting that John Lydgate undertook to English the poem at the behest of his patron, Thomas Montacute (or Montague), Earl of Salisbury, in the year 1426.⁶⁷ An anonymous prose version appears several years later in the 1430s.⁶⁸ Unlike the later prose version, the poem ascribed to Lydgate translates the second recension of Deguileville's poem, usually dated to around 1355, a revised version that is conspicuously more hostile to Jean de Meun and seemingly more concerned with the threats posed to the dreamer by practices such as physiognomy and chiromancy that were seen to be popular derivations of Aristotelian natural philosophy. Following his usual translational practice, Lydgate significantly expands his original by almost seven thousand lines. While much of this increase is no doubt due to Lydgate's habitual aureate amplification, the poem, again like the earlier *Reson and Sensuallyte*, seems particularly sympathetic to clarifying the university context of the theological issues under consideration.

Previous critics have recognized the *Pilgrimage* as a timely response to its 1420s English context insofar as it can be considered an orthodox response to Lollard charges of idolatry and fears over iconoclasm. Across several publications, Michael Camille documents the ways in which the program of illustrations found in English manuscripts of Deguileville respond to these contemporary concerns. Lydgate's translation, and the program of images that accompany it, may have sought to emphasize its orthodoxy on account of Thomas Montacute's familial history: his father had the reputation of being a Lollard sympathizer and something of an iconoclast, according to the chronicler Thomas Walsingham.⁶⁹ More recently, Lisa H. Cooper expands Camille's argument in relation to the representation of the potentially heretical figure of the craft artisan, arguing that Lydgate linked these workers with social unrest and used his translation as a vehicle for censuring these contemporary craftsmen even as he affirmed the necessity of artisanship more generally.⁷⁰ Like these studies, my argument provides further evidence for how Lydgate's translation engages anxieties about Wycliffite concerns in the 1420s following the high-profile cases of

accused Lollards such as John Oldcastle and William Thorpe in the preceding decade. Specifically, I see the *Pilgrimage* as engaging with Wycliffite-inspired debate over the Eucharist as well as the feasibility of using natural reason as a heuristic for achieving moral truth more generally.

The misguided wanderings of the natural-philosophy-loving narrator of *Reson and Sensuallyte* are transformed in Lydgate's later translation through the intellectual and spiritual rigors of pilgrimage. Like the *Eschéz d'Amours*, the *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* critiques the allegorical vision of the *Rose* by converting the narrator's earthly quest for love into a search for moral knowledge; in the latter poem, it is the salvation to be obtained in the Heavenly Jerusalem. The narrator encounters Reason, who, incapable of explaining certain supernatural aspects of the biblical episode of Moses, calls upon Nature and Grace Dieu to interpret it. Instead of educating the narrator, Nature complains badtemperedly that Grace Dieu has infringed upon her dominion in the sublunar realm. This complaint prompts Grace Dieu to remind her, none too gently, that all of Nature's powers ultimately derive from her own. Gone is the magisterial Nature of *Reson and Sensuallyte*; in her place is a self-important harridan who has no role in the correct exercise of human free will and even less in the dreamer's salvation. The antagonism between Nature and Grace is extended in a verbal battle between their respective deputies, Aristotle, who appears in propria persona to defend the claims of natural philosophy, and Sapyence, who argues winningly for the transcendent nature of the Eucharist. A pagan paper tiger, Aristotle finds himself unable to defend his objections to the physical contradictions posed by enclosing the limitless power of Christ within the finite boundaries of a small piece of bread.

Like the earlier *Reson and Sensuallyte*, Lydgate's *Pilgrimage* updates and sharpens its source's critique of Aristotelian science by introducing the language of scholastic demonstration and associating it with a potentially heterodox Aristotelian sophistry. While the *Pilgrimage*'s hostility to Nature and Aristotle follow closely on from Deguileville—an animus I discuss above in [Chapter 4](#)—the English translation emphasizes reason's association with the reductive methodology characteristic of university science. As in his source, Lydgate's Sapyence rebukes Aristotle for presuming to argue against his former teacher. Had she not created two schools, the first in which she trained Nature and the second in which Aristotle was taught the mechanics governing natural creation? In this latter school, Aristotle learns

naturys secre thynges;
To knowe the clere from the derke
.....
The causes known by and by.
(5688–93)

This second school is specifically the natural philosophical part of the arts

curriculum where Aristotle's *libri naturales* were the primary texts. This causal scientific knowledge is produced through the dialectical method: Sapyence claims that she

tauhte folkys to argue
Pro and contra ...
.....
To preuen out the sothfastnesse
Off every thyng, fro the falsnesse.
(5662–66)

When Aristotle complains that Sapyence has contradicted his theorems, the academic context of the dispute is heightened by the addition of marginal Latin tags in some manuscripts that translate the Aristotelian doctrine under consideration; for example, when Aristotle claims that the Eucharist transgresses his dictum that the whole cannot exceed the sum of its parts, at least one manuscript reads in the margin “*omne totum maius est sua parte*” and similarly when discussing the Aristotelian dictum that nature abhors a vacuum, “*Non est dare vacuum.*”⁷¹ In refuting Aristotle's well-known dictum that a thing cannot be less than the sum of its parts, Sapyence presents as a counterexample the case of the human heart, which despite its diminutive size, is the center of the intellect and hence capable of containing an infinite amount of matter:

Ffor thanne, off necessitye
Mot nedys folwen & off Resoun,
The hous or thabitacioun
Mot be lasse (a preff to wyne,)
Than the thyng yput with-Inne.
(5922–26)

Having shown that just as the heart's size does not limit its contents, so too the physical size of the eucharistic wafer is not an accurate predictor of the enormity of Christ's majesty enclosed within. Sapyence next claims that she will

devyse
A preff in a-nother wyse,
By open demonstracyouns.
(5931–33)⁷²

The language of necessity and logical consequence (“mot nedys folwen ... off necessitye”) together with the scholastic strategies of proof and *demonstratio* emphasize that this exchange is meant to evoke the context of a university disputation. By way of contrast, this language is absent from the

corresponding passage in the later prose translation of the *Pèlerinage*.⁷³ As in the earlier *Reson and Sensuallyte*, the *Pilgrimage* translator introduces small but significant changes that heighten the tension between an orthodox understanding of the physical world as handmaiden to Grace and an academic view that was more willing to grant Nature a certain amount of autonomy.

The *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, unlike the earlier *Reson and Sensuallyte*, does not champion the rational faculty as a consistently reliable hermeneutic tool for the narrator. While Reason helps the narrator in certain episodes, the later translation clearly dramatizes Reason's limitations with respect to biblical exegesis. If Reason's benefits are qualified, even less worthwhile are Nature and her ally Aristotle, both of whom are shown to be active impediments to spiritual understanding. In the *Pilgrimage*, there is no possibility of a rationalized Nature to guard against the excesses of Aristotelian natural philosophy; now the two are one and the same. Just as Lydgate's translation sharpens his source's critique of scholastic ways of looking at nature, so too the sections that address the dangers of naturalism with respect to eucharistic doctrine specifically reflect its fifteenth-century moment of production. These anxieties are in evidence in the exchange between Aristotle and Sapyence about how to understand the presence of Christ in the eucharistic bread. Aristotle attempts to change the terms of debate about the Eucharist onto more academic grounds by asking Sapyence whether she understands the enclosure of Christ in the bread as a "local" occurrence or a "virtual" one—that is, does she believe that Christ's presence is physically in the bread or that it exists there in some more figurative sense? One of the striking aspects of this exchange is that the translator chooses to render key terms of how the Eucharist should be understood in scholastic Latin rather than in the vernacular. Sapyence rejects the idea that Christ's presence can be understood either "Localiter," "thys [is] to seyne ... / He occupieth ther no place" (6026–28) or "Virtualiter" (6050), the idea that his presence there is in some sense to be understood causally. She instead affirms that spiritual presence inheres in the bread concretely,

Bothen "Corporaliter"
And also ek "Realiter;"
Bothe "Presencialiter"
And also ek "Veraciter."
(6053–56)

Stephanie Kamath rightfully notes that the bilingual juxtaposition is found in neither Lydgate's French source nor in the later Middle English prose translation. It highlights, for Kamath, the privileged status of the verse translator with respect to his reader; the translator "chooses to emphasize the Latinate basis of this text's hermeneutic system even as it makes interpretation more elaborately present in English."⁷⁴ To Kamath's perceptive

insight, I would add that the juxtaposition also ultimately serves the episode's larger ideological purpose: it signals the translator's unease with vernacular discussion of the Eucharist, a discussion radicalized by Lollard critique. Moreover, it signals the translator's ambivalence about balancing the demand for fidelity to his source and for promoting the orthodox view against an anxiety over discussing these theological doctrines in the vernacular.

The conspicuous juxtaposition of Latin and English in this passage is one of those translative moments that telegraph the more polarized eucharistic climate that prevailed in fifteenth-century England than in France seventy years before, when Deguileville composed and then subsequently revised his work. The terms that the translator assigns to Latin are terms of Aristotelian predication that, while present in the previous century's eucharistic lexicon, had become polemicized by the end of the fourteenth century. All later medieval theologians reject a "local" understanding of Christological presence—that is, the idea that Christ is present in his dimensive quality in the bread.⁷⁵ While there was general agreement that the divine was not subject to limits of mundane space, there was much disagreement over how his presence inhered in the wafer. Scholastic discourse often contrasts those truths that are known *simpliciter*, or directly from revelation or faith, with those that are known *virtualiter*, or understood from their causes (sometimes used concomitantly with *causaliter*) and, hence, fall under the rubric of *scientia*. In terms of post-Wycliffite debate over the Eucharist, to understand the sacrament *virtualiter* was to understand it as having an imaginative or representational relation to Christ rather than an actual one, a view often associated with Wyclif and his followers. In the words of Anne Hudson, we find the following position attributed to the Lollards in the treatises gathered in the *Fasciculi zizaniorum*, a collection of fourteenth-century anti-Lollard texts that were compiled and edited in Norwich in the 1430s: "Bread and wine are *habitudinaliter* or *figuraliter* the body and blood; the consecrated host is not called Christ *sed efficax ejus signum*, or again *Christus non est ibi realiter secundum suam substantiam corporalem, sed figurative vel virtualiter; ita quod non est ibi aliquo modo nisi tropice*."⁷⁶ While Wyclif himself did not fully reject the Real Presence in the Eucharist nor did he wholly embrace the commemorative view of transubstantiation, his more figurative understanding opened the way for later Lollards to state more radical views, views that exhibited sympathy for consubstantiation and remanentism (the idea that some bread remains after the consecration).⁷⁷ In the verse translation, Sapyence affirms the orthodox doctrine of "substance without accidents" but declines to engage with Aristotle over the specifics of the physics, a physics that Wyclif had been at pains to attempt to delineate.

The translator's choice to render the scholastic theological terms in Latin goes beyond just showing the university provenance of the debate: it suggests an ambivalence about having such debates in the vernacular at all;

this choice resists the terms' complete assimilation into the vernacular, perhaps a tacit acknowledgment of the conflict between a desire to make the orthodox position clearer and the danger posed by vernacular theology following Arundel's prohibitions in 1409. In the same manner that, as Camille argues, the manuscript illuminations in one copy of Lydgate's *Pilgrimage* emphasize orthodox attitudes to the problem of idolatry, so too Lydgate's translational practice attempts to model correct theological positions even as it betrays anxieties about having this debate in the vernacular at all. In addition to the epistemological effect of the translation's *ordinatio*, there is a significant doctrinal one, since these terms, in this form, would have been recognizable to an academic reader familiar with the debate. In this sense, the Latin would not just remind a vernacular reader of the translator's access to a Latin hermeneutic system, it would signal to the literati that the translator understood the potential dangers of his own translation.

The ambivalence betrayed by Lydgate's translation practices is characteristic of a wider fifteenth-century poetic conversation about how Aristotelian modes of predication and natural reason potentially undermine orthodox understandings of the Eucharist. Similar language is found in a lyric on the sacraments in Oxford, Bodleian MS Digby 102 (ca. 1425–50), a manuscript produced in Yorkshire that also contains a copy of *Piers Plowman*. This poem discourages the application of Aristotelian physics to the sacrament and emphasizes the gap between that which is apparent to the senses and that which is fundamentally true. The writer contrasts mere “fleshly” looking at the bread with the spiritual knowledge of what is contained beneath its surface:

Pou seest not fleschly þou takest þenne;
Þy byleue of herte, makeþ þe fast fro ded,
Wiþouten *ordre of þynges*, to renne,
By tokene and word þat he bede.

Wiþ-outen help of *ordre of þyngis*,
Þe bok of oure byleue is lent,
Vnder dyuerce spices [species] only tokenynges,
Þou3 þe spices fro hym be went

Not durked ne hyd, but riȝt shynynges,
Þou3 fleschly syȝt fro hym be blent,
Þe soule haþ ioie, and mery synges,
When good byleue seep þe sacrament.⁷⁸

According to the poet, what you see is not what you get in the Eucharist. Understanding a theological truth never depends on knowing the “order of things.” Just as Alain Chartier denounced those who would “embrace thordir

of the causis,” the Digby author states that spiritual understanding is independent of both Nature’s laws and the human modes of distinction that seek to capture them. The “order of things” brings to mind the encyclopedic parsing of the visible world characteristic of the natural philosophy from Aristotle’s *libri naturales* to universal *summae* found in works such as Bartholomeus Anglicus’s *De proprietatibus rerum*, a work translated into English by John Trevisa in the 1380s and, according to Michael Twomey, the most popular late medieval encyclopedia in England. Like Nicholas Love earlier in the century, the Digby poet argues for the imperviousness of the eucharistic metaphor (flesh is bread) to the depredations of the seriality of division that underlies the Aristotelian way of dividing up the world into causes and effects. Moreover, the lyric substitutes a model of spiritual sight for the empirical observation (“fleschly syȝt”) of the natural philosopher: the contradiction between appearance and reality—accidents and substance—rejected by Aristotelian physics is resolved when “good byleue”—inner faith rather than the senses—is the instrument of cognition. The hostility to naturalism in the lyric, a hostility similarly codified in the *Pilgrimage*’s view of Nature as fallen and associated with a reductionist form of natural reason, may have seemed a useful antidote to the radical eucharistic views of Wyclif and his followers that emphasized the common ground between the natural and the sacred. Wyclif’s position with respect to the fourteenth-century orthodox belief is neatly summarized by Jeremy Catto: “The doctrine of transubstantiation, with its insistence on the total suspension of the natural order, emphasized the gulf between humanity and the Eucharist. The doctrine of remanence, with which he proposed to replace it, minimized the difference between human and sacramental being: by placing the Eucharist in the context of familiar nature, it brought Christ close to men and invited a more direct relationship.”⁷⁹ Whereas the orthodox position on the Eucharist, promoted in this lyric and in Lydgate’s *Pilgrimage*, emphasized the miracle of grace and therefore the unintelligibility of the sacrament to human reason, Wyclif’s own view had sought to narrow the distance between the divine and the earthly, between the supernatural and the natural. The *Pilgrimage*’s representation of eucharistic piety shows us precisely how wide this gap is, demonstrating that only foolish pagans and a determinist Nature think otherwise.

Beyond the more narrowly defined sacramental anxiety, the wider problem of how to access the spiritual through the visible world is woven into the fabric of Lydgate’s translation, a peril that was evident to the English poem’s early readers. The Aristotelian habit of mind that valued the perceptible environment as a profitable manner of approach to those things that were invisible to the eye is implicitly critiqued in the wider scheme of the poem’s allegory. Early readers of Lydgate’s translation seem to have been alert to this context as well, as witnessed by a gloss in one of the three extant manuscripts of the poem. Toward the poem’s end, the dreamer finds

himself stranded on an island in the Sea of Mutability, the changeable, material world that symbolizes estrangement from the divine. Lamenting his plight, the dreamer is approached by a ship captained by Grace Dieu, who assures him that he shall be saved but only through “mercy and pytee” (21775) and in despite of the things of this world. In the British Library’s MS Cotton Vitellius C.13, the rock upon which the dreamer sits—and which Grace Dieu a few lines later calls “thys dredful peryllous yle” (21762)—is glossed as “Arystoteles” (Figure 10). While the gloss is in a later hand than the text itself, it makes a connection that would have been available to a contemporary reader: it serves as a reminder of the earlier confrontation between Aristotle and Sapyence, Grace Dieu’s chosen proxy. The allegory of this passage, underscored by the gloss, suggests that the Aristotelian view of the physical world, which defines nature as perpetual motion and change, lies in stark contrast to the stability of God’s grace.

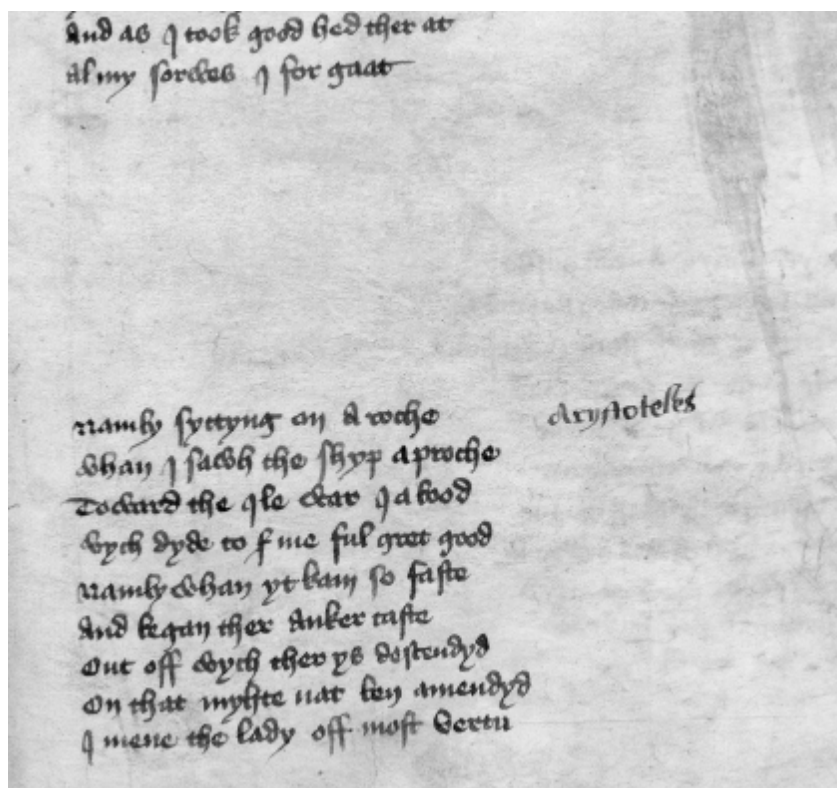


FIGURE 10. Marginal gloss “Arystoteles.” London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius C.13, fol. 283r. © British Library Board.

As his translation makes clear, Lydgate had found much to admire in Deguileville: not only the championing of the monastic life at the end of the *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*, but perhaps, more significantly, a way to return to the claims of reason and the problem of natural order that he had begun

thinking about with his translation of the *Eschéz* more than a decade earlier. These two translations share a commitment to personification allegory as an ethical vehicle and also to an ideal of the poet as a valuable mediator between the lay reader and his or her salvation. They also both evidence the complex ways that academic discussions do not just trickle down into the vernacular but how such popular discussions could potentially engage and comment upon the current state of these academic distinctions.

Unlike the relatively optimistic assessment of human understanding present in *Reson and Sensuallyte*, however, *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* asserts that reason is too difficult to disentangle from nature, too “kyndely” after all. By the 1420s, it seems that Lydgate was more inclined to return to the position of Bernard of Clairvaux, who had maintained that “fides piorum credit, non discutit” (the faith of the devout believes, it does not dispute).⁸⁰

The Trials of “Kyndely Reson”

If we can attribute an evolution to Lydgate’s views on the possibilities of natural reason in these two translations, his diminished sense of its purpose can be said to participate in a wider and particularly English response to these problems. As such, Lydgate’s translations can be considered a vital part of a literary and philosophical genealogy stretching back to the thirteenth-century condemnations of Aristotelian natural philosophy. Just as this past controversy continued to shape philosophical poetics, so too it was to have tangible effects in fifteenth-century church politics as the allegorical trials of “kyndely reson” yielded to actual inquisitions.

What had been a literary contest over the extremes of natural determinism in the *querelle de la Rose* in France would become a conflict with substantial theological consequences in England. If Jean Gerson and Christine de Pisan frequently charged their opponents with “heresy” in a court of love, those charges would eventually be made in ecclesiastical courts across the channel. The unfortunate case of Reginald Pecock, bishop and anti-Lollard polemicist, would become a cautionary tale for even orthodox writers inclined to champion “kyndely reson” in vernacular theological writings later in the century. Pecock had intended to counter the Wycliffite threat through a series of writings designed to prove that one could defeat heterodox interpretations of the sacrament not through appeals to doctrine and revelation but through appeals to the “doom of natural resoun.”⁸¹ His insistence on meeting the Lollards on their own terms, those of natural reason, rather than taking the high road of clerical infallibility or the indemonstrable nature of faith, were part of his undoing. Pecock’s *Book of Faith* (1456) argues, contra Bernard of Clairvaux and others, that reason and faith are not exclusive. He challenges the authority of no less than St. Gregory, whose assertion that faith loses its merit when subjected to the

proofs of human reason was a literal “article of faith” regularly repeated in orthodox treatises and pastoral materials. Noting that even “holy men may err,” Pecock argues at length that Gregory is mistaken, since the biblical episode of doubting Thomas demonstrates that sensory experience can substantively contribute to the development of a profound faith. Like Aquinas, Pecock believed that, while reason could not be the basis of faith, its value and certainty remain undiminished by demonstration; “open experience” was not the opposite of faith, but a useful heuristic for affirming it.⁸² As Stephen E. Lahey contends, this position was characteristic of “Pecock’s hope of evoking the relative serenity of thirteenth-century Aristotelian synthesis in an age of *moderni* skepticism and anti-intellectual fideism.”⁸³ Leaving aside the question of how serene the late thirteenth century may have been for Thomists, it was certainly the case that Pecock’s attempts to reconcile natural law with scripture in order to confute heresy was a dangerous undertaking, one that, in his critics’ eyes, perversely allied the anti-Lollard Pecock with those he sought to censure. Pecock’s skepticism about previous authorities joined with his insistence on human reason as an instrument of faith was in part responsible for his condemnation by the archbishop of Canterbury in 1457. Pecock was forced to abjure his writings and give up his episcopal authority, living out his life in seclusion. Though later than Lydgate’s translations, we can see in Pecock’s condemnation a concrete example of how dangerous sympathy to a certain variety of rationalism might be, even when that rationalism was in the service of an orthodox, anti-heretical program. By the mid-fifteenth century, combating the Lollard threat required giving up “kyndely reson” altogether.

Both Lydgate’s translations and the fate of Reginald Pecock suggest that Aristotle, long a figure for rationalizing modes of inquiry, had become radicalized in English in part on account of Wycliffite-inspired controversy over the proper role of the senses in coming to spiritual and moral knowledge. No longer “the master of those who know” as he was for Dante, Aristotle would perhaps be more likely to be called the “Antichrist” by those orthodox fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English writers, learned and popular, who were more fearful of the dangers of natural determinism than intrigued by the possibilities of aligning earthly and transcendent values into a cohesive ethical system. The constellation of reason, Aristotle, and Lollardy had become polemicized in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the same ways and at roughly the same time in both academic and extra-academic contexts. Fifteenth-century popular poetry and academic natural philosophy had similar stakes in representing the natural world and were, consequently, similarly responsive to renewed calls for orthodoxy in the early fifteenth century. The “dullness” one finds there could, in the alternate narrative I have been proposing here, better be described as an attempt to explore what use could be made of Nature’s benefits without succumbing to the perceived dangers of a “too natural” natural reason. At a

time when literary and philosophical experimentation in texts could have real-world consequences, poets, theologians, and philosophers experimented at their own risk.

EPILOGUE

moderne poets,” and, by way of comparison, points out that even his learned friend Edmund Spenser, by his own admission, lacks such a deep knowledge of the physical world.²

While the slight to Spenser is neither generous nor particularly well-deserved, Harvey’s assessment is useful for what it tells us about the reception of these earlier poets by a committed reader of medieval texts at the end of the sixteenth century. His comments suggest that the difference between the “superficial” Renaissance humanist and the medieval “universal” scholar lies in a capacious, rather than just passing, knowledge of the natural world. Medieval poetic interest in “philosophical”—and, for Harvey, this denoted “natural philosophical”—material was one of the hallmarks of this universal learning. He says that poets should be “exquisite artists,” and by this he likely meant a person well versed in the trivium and quadrivium.³ But what particularly did he admire in these earlier writers? Harvey helpfully provides a lengthy and illuminating list of examples, taken mostly from Chaucer. In addition to technical astronomical knowledge (the *Treatise on the Astrolabe* in its entirety; passages in the *Squire’s Tale* and the beginning of book 2 of *Troilus and Criseyde*), he approvingly cites descriptions of seasonal change (the opening of the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* and the description of winter in the *Franklin’s Tale*); planetary influence and nativities (*Man of Law’s Prologue*, *Nun’s Priest Tale*, *Legend of Good Women*); the physical properties of stones (*Romaunt of the Rose*) and artificial technology (the magical gifts in the *Squire’s Tale*); as well as descriptions of alchemists (*Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale*) and natural philosophers (*Franklin’s Tale*).⁴ Significantly, Harvey admires those passages that are frequently the most perplexing to the modern reader, the natural digressions that, in C. S. Lewis’s words, make the modern reader “suspect pedantry” but that were ubiquitous in medieval poetry.⁵ Unlike many of his early modern contemporaries who self-reflexively sought to “humanize” Chaucer by pointing out those passages in his poetry that conformed to neoclassical rhetorical conventions, Harvey values those aspects of the earlier writer that medieval readers (such as Thomas Usk) had also valued in him.⁶ In this way, Harvey exhibits a Janus-faced literary taste: he displays a fondness for the commonplaces of medieval natural philosophy even as he is in the process of redefining an early modern humanism that sought to distance itself from its scholastic past.

Harvey is a useful vantage point from which to look back on the medieval conversations about nature outlined in this book both because he is a perspicacious reader of many of the poets I have considered here and because his interpretations of them were so unusual when compared to those of his literary-minded contemporaries. Harvey himself acknowledges that his critical temper is out of step with his time: while he admires the science of Chaucer and Lydgate, others admire their witty character, rhetorical variety, and “humanitie.” Importantly, it was these “others” who

would largely dictate how medieval poetry was received in the early modern period, an aesthetic judgment that continues to shape our relationship with these writers today.

This epilogue considers medieval Lady Nature's last allegorical stand: her treatment at the hands of Edmund Spenser, a poet whose response to his medieval poetic antecedents in *The Faerie Queene* was just as atypical as that of his friend Harvey. Like Harvey, Spenser looked backward and forward at once: back to the medieval tradition of personification allegory and ahead to the new ways in which popular Protestant writers would envision the powers of nature within a providential eschatology. If Harvey and Spenser recognized and applauded the natural philosophical interests of their predecessors, this sympathetic recognition would become even rarer as the Aristotelian natural philosophy with which these medieval writers had so actively engaged was gradually dismantled over the course of the early modern period. The minority votes of Harvey and Spenser notwithstanding, the voice of Nature becomes increasingly harder to hear as early modern literary criticism and natural philosophy worked in tandem to redefine their respective inheritances. The humanist mistrust of an anthropomorphized Nature continues to influence our contemporary assumptions about how we can legitimately speak about a natural world imagined as largely coextensive with the human. While the extended personification of Nature would largely die out in the early modern period, now is a timely moment to return to the ethical questions that she emblemized, since they have reemerged as central to contemporary environmental debates over the role of the human and the posthuman on the wider ecological stage.

Medieval Nature on Arlo Hill

If, according to Gabriel Harvey, Spenser claimed little knowledge of the practical astronomy that featured so conspicuously in the poetry of Chaucer and Lydgate, modern critics have sought to moderate this assessment, documenting the ample contemporary scientific allusions found in his writings, even as his poem is built around a more traditional cosmology.⁷ Beyond the extent of Spenser's mastery of particular scientific doctrines lies the wider question of how Spenser transforms both Aristotelian views of nature and the poetic legacy of the writers shaped by it.

A personified Nature does not play a significant role in the ethical systems of much early modern English poetry, and Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is anomalous in this respect as in so many others.⁸ Lady Nature appears at the poem's end in the so-called *Mutabilitie Cantos*, the fragmentary ending first appended to Spenser's epic only in the posthumous 1609 printing. These cantos are as perplexing as they are seemingly incomplete: the narrator, having left behind his search for models of virtuous courtesy as well as the

fairyland wanderings of knights and endangered maidens, turns his attention to Dame Mutabilitie, ruler of the sublunary realm. She has challenged Jove's celestial rule, claiming that her own dominion should rightfully extend further into the heavens given the pervasive influence of change. The "great goddess," Lady Nature, is called upon to arbitrate this dispute, and a parliament is called on Arlo Hill, a pastoralized version of the geography surrounding Spenser's own Irish manor. This mountain becomes a microcosm of the world, where the deities gather together with

all other creatures,
What-ever life or motion doe retaine,
According to their sundry kinds of features.
(7.4.28–30)

Before this assembly, Dame Mutabilitie asserts that stability is an illusion and change the only constant in the world, as she catalogs at length the various kinds of change to which all elemental compounds are subject over time. To underscore her point that time is the engine of change, Mutabilitie has Nature bring forth an extended allegorical pageant of the seasons, months, days, and hours. In response to this temporal drama, Jove asserts that, while time rules all change, the gods themselves rule time. At the end of this debate, Nature is called upon to render judgment. She rules against Dame Mutabilitie and the invidiousness of continual change, arguing that, beneath the visible cycles of motion and transformation, there exists an invisible, divinely sanctioned stability.

It is perhaps unsurprising that Spenser, that most self-consciously archaizing of early modern English poets, returns to the personification of Nature as well as the formulaic digressions on natural phenomena that characterize so much of medieval poetry, learned and popular. Some critics have read Spenser's Nature as a straightforward revival of the Neoplatonic, transcendent goddess, a figure elaborated upon by Alan of Lille, whose *De planctu naturae* is mentioned by name; others have noted that Spenser's Nature differs from both Alan and Chaucer insofar as she claims that the problem is in how Mutabilitie (and humans) perceive change that results from the cosmic order rather than how humans exercise their own agency.⁹ What I wish to emphasize here is how Spenser's representation departs from his medieval prototypes in order to harness Nature into the literary and theological traces of *The Faerie Queene*. In separating off Mutabilitie from Nature, Spenser effectively seals off the divinely sanctioned human world from the fallen nonhuman world of continual striving.

The first sign of Spenser's refashioning of Nature is her physical appearance, a description that signals the poet's ambivalent treatment of the medieval stereotype he inherited. Since her face is heavily veiled, the poet cannot describe her; indeed, he does not know for certain whether she is really a "she" at all. Instead, he describes the debate over her features: some

say that she is terrifying to look upon like a lion; others, that the brilliance of her beauty surpasses the sun. Her dress is similarly beyond description: the narrator first compares his inability to describe it to that of the dumbstruck apostles who witness Jesus radiantly transfigured on Mount Tabor.¹⁰ This biblical precedent for the indescribability topos is soon followed by a literary one:

So hard it is for any living wight
All her array and vestiments to tell,
That old Dan Geffrey (in whose gentle spright,
The pure well head of poesie did dwell)
In his *Foules Parley* durst not with it mel,
But it transferd to Alane, who he thought
Had in his *Plaint of Kinde* describ'd it well:
Which who will read set forth so as it ought,
Go seek he out that Alane where he may be sought.
(7.9.73–81)

Spenser's inability to describe Nature's garments is licensed by that of his literary forebear Chaucer, whose *Parliament of Fowls* had similarly passed the ekphrastic buck back to his source, Alan of Lille's *De planctu naturae*. Through the transitive property of nondescription, Spenser links himself to his literary antecedents and, through them, to the series of arguments that this book has been tracing. These arguments revolved around Nature's moral authority, the extent to which the natural order impinges on the human, and the role of the poet as mediator between natural, human, and divine systems of value. Yet Spenser affirms neither the magisterial Nature of cosmographical writers such as Alan nor the compatibilist-questioning Nature of Chaucer. Instead, Spenser's Nature becomes a topos from which to speak about the manifold position of the early modern poet. In an act of both theological and literary affiliation, the indescribability topos allows Spenser to imagine himself simultaneously as both apostolic witness and poetic heir, a self-conscious positioning that signals the poet's ambitions with regard to theology as well as an imagined medieval literary canon.

If Nature's appearance is mysterious, even more provocative to those familiar with the medieval stereotype is her relation to Dame Mutabilitie. Spenser's allegory conspicuously partitions off aspects of Nature's character that were regularly united in the medieval tradition: nature as a principle of *taxis* (order or arrangement) is here separated from nature as principle of *physis* (change or growth). Negotiating between these two aspects of her character generated much of the medieval allegory's philosophical tension, a tension with which Spenser's allegory dispenses. Dame Mutabilitie, whom Spenser calls "Proud Change," is shown to work against Nature's benign rule:

For she [Dame Mutabilitie] the face of earthly things
so changed,
That all which Nature had establisht first
In good estate, and in meet order ranged,
She did pervert, and all their statutes burst.
(6.5.37–40)

Spenser divides off cyclical change, dissolution, and regeneration from Nature herself, who retains her magisterial role as ordering principle and, hence, in this allegorical dispute, moral arbiter. This is a significant change from most late medieval characterizations of Nature that often derived their ethical drama from the imperative to conciliate between the warring principles of, on the one hand, Aristotelian *physis* and, on the other, the eternal forms that populated the Book of Nature.¹¹ Spenser's Nature, by contrast, must be de-natured of physical mutability before she can align herself with divine immutability. Some critics have seen in Mutabilitie a challenge to Aristotelian conceptions of how the universe works, arguing that she is a figure for the newer Copernican science that would, in the decades after Spenser, decenter the earth.¹² We need not make Spenser a proto-scientific revolutionary, however, to imagine Mutabilitie as a challenge to Nature's powers. Mutabilitie's challenge is, on the surface, a particularly medieval one: her emphasis on sensory perception across time (we see the moon's phases; we see the planets look different from month to month) aligns her with those medieval naturalists who would insist that our experience of the visible world needs to be accounted for even if it cannot serve as the ultimate basis of our rational judgment. What signals a shifting conception of earthly change is the poem's insistence that its temporal dimension may have the most determining power. Time here appears as cosmic co-regent alongside Mutabilitie, who calls the seasons and the other temporal divisions "the rest which doe the world in being hold" (7.27.237). Mutabilitie, as an agent of unceasing flux, is shown to be bound up with the linear progress of time, the tendency toward dissolution and entropy that she describes in detail, while Nature's more elevated view of the world allows her to see time in its cyclical maturity. This enlarged role for time, a departure from the late medieval allegorical tradition, will become the crux of the dominion dispute between Dame Mutabilitie and Jove.

We are never really in doubt as to who will win this dispute: much like Deguileville's Lady Nature, Spenser's Dame Mutabilitie is shown to be an ambitious usurper from the outset, overreaching her appointed station in the sublunary sphere. Yet the outcome of the conflict is central to the theological message of the *Faerie Queene*. It rewrites the late medieval scholastic argument over nature—that is, the extent to which Christian orthodoxy can or should be accommodated to Greek natural philosophy—as an argument that is firmly set in a mythographic past and one whose solution involves a

Protestant vision of reformed time. What had been a medieval debate between Greek science and a Catholic conception of grace is converted by Spenser to an intra-mythographic spat between a “Titanesse” (Dame Mutabilite) and Jove. This non-Christian setting is necessary because it renders moot the scholastic arguments over compatibilism that had so bedeviled academic and popular writers on the nature question from the mid-thirteenth century onward. Nature’s appearance marks an oddly metapoetic moment in the *Faerie Queene*, a moment when classical mythography touches down on the Irish hills near the actual poet’s house. In order for Spenser’s allegorical solution to work, the urgent medieval debate over the extent of Nature’s powers has to be relocated to the “whilom” of a distant classical past, but it is a mythographic dispute located in a recognizably contemporary and precisely localizable place. This moment exists simultaneously in the present and in the past, just like Spenser’s vision of Nature herself, which looks back to medieval allegories of scholastic controversy over determinism even as it points to Spenser’s own engagement with a reformed, humanist Nature. The queer time machine of Arlo Hill allows Spenser to sidestep the doctrinally ticklish question of compatibilism at the heart of many late medieval representations of Nature—how compatible are scriptural hermeneutics and Greek science, revelation and pagan naturalism?—and to replace it with an altogether different one concerning the nature of providential time itself.

Unlike her garrulous medieval predecessors, Spenser’s Nature is a personification of few words. In less than two stanzas, she decisively rejects Dame Mutabilitie’s arguments by redefining the nature of change in relation to both earthly time and the unfolding of the providential plan (7.58–59). Nature’s succinct verdict undertakes to answer several related natural philosophical questions: Does change ontologically alter a substance? What is the nature of this change? What power does earthly change have over its object? In Nature’s estimation, change does not alter a thing’s essential being (its “first estate”); rather earthly things extend and enlarge themselves (“dilate”) through time, a process that ultimately brings a thing back again to its initial form (its “owne perfection”). Critics have rightly noted the obscurity of Nature’s formulation and have argued over precisely what Nature intends in this passage.¹³ The salient point for my argument is that Spenser’s Nature rejects the Aristotelian idea that the process of change—growth, dissolution, regeneration—is in itself privileged. Instead, all substances retain their own sovereign agency in spite of apparent alteration (“Then over them [i.e., all things] Change doth not rule and raigne; / But they raigne over Change, and doe their states maintaine”; 7.58.521–22). Change is not the engine that drives being; rather, it is merely the instrument through which a thing accedes to its perfect form. Spenser’s Nature perceives not just the continuity of substance under the shifting forms that mark an entity’s teleological development (Aristotle’s view) but

the ability of sublunary things to attain to a circular cycle of regenerative growth and perfection. In showing that change is illusory, Spenser expands the role of time, as the execution of Nature's plan critically depends on temporal "dilation." In Jove's words, time works to "disseise" things of their being.

With Mutabilitie's ambitious claims to dominion firmly rebuked, Nature concludes her judgment by shifting decisively from ontology to temporality. According to Nature, Mutabilitie cannot be in charge because providential time is at work on *her* as well: "But time shall come that all shall changed bee, / And from thenceforth none no more change shall see" (7.59.526–27). Earthly change can only truly be understood in an eschatological context that takes the timeless eternity of God as its vanishing point. This providential vision is affirmed by the narrator at the beginning of the next fragmentary canto. He acknowledges Mutabilitie's power over conformable earthly things and then sets his sights on the steadfast "pillours of eternity" beyond. The poet imagines a future world of blissful rest:

But thence-forth all shall rest eternally
With Him that is the God of Sabbaoth hight:
O that great Sabbaoth God graunt me that Sabaoths sight!
(8.2.547–49)

It is here that the *Mutabilitie Cantos* and the *Faerie Queene* break off unfinished, at this moment of defining earthly change as the opposite of divine rest, an eternal stasis available only after the final reckoning. In these last cantos, a meditation on physics becomes the vehicle through which the poet petitions for his own salvation; it is the imaginative engine that allows him to conceive of a providential plan that is otherwise beyond human conception.

For Spenser, however, in order for Nature to be aligned with the eternal stability of the divine plan, she can no longer be associated with the unstable world of Aristotelian *physis*. Lacking this contingency, she can no longer be the vocal participant in arguments over the human will that she was for medieval writers—arguments that had been superseded by a reformed conception of the will that saw it as less active than its medieval counterpart. For Spenser, Nature is not about what inclines (or does not incline) human choice but rather about the dwindling insignificance of such choice in the face of the totalizing nature of God's timeless grace.

This use of Nature and natural philosophy, like Spenser's invocation of "old Dan Geffrey," is ironically a sign of Spenser's own modernity rather than a wistful return to the past.¹⁴ It is a marker of the historical distance between Spenser and those medieval poets, philosophers, and theologians who had personified nature in order to discuss what the human shared with the natural world around them. In the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, being is largely an effect of time, a time fully extensive with God's divine plan. My point here is

not that Spenser's Nature should be considered a Heideggerian *avant la lettre*; rather, in order to understand the radical nature of Spenser's personification, it is necessary to look not just at his medieval literary antecedents but also at the philosophical debates in which they participated. In conspicuously refashioning Nature for new theological ends, Spenser's allegory moves away from the medieval problematic of nature that centered around what it is that makes the human truly human.

The question that animates the *Mutabilitie Cantos* is not whether beings (including humans) live, decay, and regenerate according to inherent inclinations but rather how time causes such change. The ubiquitous medieval debate over natural necessity and will—What is required by a model of teleological change? Is such a model at work in human beings in the same way that it is in the rest of nature?—has been transformed into debate over how time is or is not an instrument of the divine will. The medieval allegory of Nature as an emblem for inherent inclination has been overwritten by the idea of Nature as an effect of an instrumental temporality. For Spenser, Nature is no longer a place from which to speak about God's omnipotence bumping up against the rough edges of his own ordained laws. Nature, liberated from the medieval dream vision and the scholastic thought experiment, alights on Arlo Hill, a place that acts as a "toy medium," in Daniel Tiffany's phrase.¹⁵ This conspicuously pagan, mythographic setting miniaturizes medieval debates over God's ordinate as opposed to his absolute power, issues that recede before the fact of eschatology and eternity. On Arlo Hill, Nature loses both her causal powers and her ability to speak about what is or is not human and instead gains a vatic voice in which she speaks a unitary Protestant truth, the perfection that will attend the last judgment. Like Spenser's "old Dan Geffrey," Nature assumes a deictic role; she points more than she speaks.

Having delivered her terse judgment, personified Lady Nature disappears from the scene: "And Natur's selfe did vanish, whither no man wist" (7.59.531). Spenser's poem likewise ends just two stanzas later. What is often true of Spenser's writing is especially true of the *Faerie Queene's* ending: when the poet appears to be at his most backward-looking, he is actually most engaged with the future. Nature's abrupt departure at the very end of *The Faerie Queene* foreshadows the personification's notable disappearance from early modern English literature. While she will make epiphenomenal appearances in masques, court drama, and romances, she will no longer play the crucial ethical role that she did in medieval poetry.¹⁶ One could make a simple causal argument regarding this literary vanishing act: as the fortunes of Aristotelian philosophy declined, so too the fortunes of Lady Nature. But, as the New Historicists taught us, literature and other cultural formations do not function in such transparently congruous ways, and the early modern story is more interesting and more complex. It is necessary to understand what happens to Aristotelian natural philosophy in the early modern period

in order to track the ways in which poetry and philosophy continued to grapple with the representational problem of nature and the set of medieval debates surrounding it that this book has been considering. While a complete account of these historical pressures is beyond the scope of this epilogue, it is still useful to gesture toward some of them, since, as I will argue, these same pressures influenced how the early modern canon of English literature was formed and how medieval writers' interest in natural philosophy was characterized (or, in some cases, discounted).

Aristotle Among the Booksellers: Redefining Poetry and Natural Philosophy

The early modern decline of Aristotelianism is a familiar narrative and has been told in compelling detail by many intellectual historians as well as historians of science, including Charles B. Schmitt, Stephen Gaukroger, and Steven Shapin among others.¹⁷ Under pressure from empirical science and Reformation theology, Aristotelian teleology went out of fashion when nature began to be imagined as a force operating according to mechanical or atomic principles. No longer controlled by an inner force of becoming, organisms were seen to be collections of parts, whose coherence came from an external power, an order imposed from the outside in. Eventually, nature came to be imagined not as an inherent inclination or a self-moving body—much less a personified power—but as a machine. These shifts were gradual and occurred in different places at different speeds; historians of philosophy, notably Robert Pasnau and Dominik Perler, have traced the resilience of particular Aristotelian doctrines as well as the more general worldview that they supported up through the end of the seventeenth century.¹⁸ Though uneven, this process was inexorable. Over the course of two centuries, what had been a fraught but workable *détente* between Aristotelian natural philosophy and Catholic ecclesiastical orthodoxy in the late Middle Ages was slowly dismantled in European reforming circles. From the early sixteenth century onward, Aristotle's natural science began to be deemed too "popish," too closely tied to medieval scholasticism. Martin Luther succinctly dismissed the medieval reliance on the philosopher in the divinity curriculum: "briefly, the whole Aristotle is to theology as darkness is to light."¹⁹ Erasmus similarly ridiculed what he saw as the pretensions of Aristotelian natural philosophers, the learned men who measured the sun and the moon, who looked for the causes of lightning, winds, and eclipses, and who acted "*quasi naturae rerum architectrici fuerint a secretis quasue e deorum consilio nobis aduenerint*" (as if they were private secretaries to nature herself, the inventors of all things, or as if they came down to us from the council of the gods).²⁰ Notice that the old charge of Aristotle as merely

“scriptor naturae” is here revived to good polemical effect. Aristotle and scholasticism came to stand metonymically for medieval Catholicism as a whole, a trope that spreads across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In his *Leviathan* (1651), a treatise predominantly concerned with sovereignty and right rule, Thomas Hobbes takes the opportunity to mock the legacy of the medieval university system, saying that it served only “as a handmaid to the Roman religion: and since the authority of Aristotle is only current there, that study is not properly philosophy ... but *Aristotelity*.”²¹ In Protestant hostility to Aristotelianism, we can hear echoes of those medieval writers—Bonaventure and Tempier among them—who mistrusted Aristotle some 250 years earlier, orthodox Catholic theologians whom early modern reforming writers would equally mistrust, but whose rhetorical salvos they would borrow when it proved useful. As Christia Mercer has recently argued, medieval anti-Aristotelianism proved durable and portable over the early modern period from Luther to Leibniz, as the gradual development of the so-called “new science” often seemed to demand the effacement of the “old religion.”²²

While the fortunes of Aristotelian natural philosophy were waning under a complex set of religious and scientific pressures, there was also a change in what the term “philosophy” meant and what it connoted in the English print market, shifts that were to impact the fate of medieval Lady Nature. Whereas the Middle English “philosophie” had frequently denoted natural philosophy (when it did not refer to learning more widely), the term increasingly began to denote “moral philosophy” in early modern English.²³ If, during the early modern period, philosophy began to refer more exclusively to the realm of human morals instead of the laws of inclination shared between the human and nonhuman, this shift finds a corollary in the early modern reception of the Aristotelian corpus as it came to be printed. The broad criticisms of writers such as Luther and Hobbes notwithstanding, Aristotle’s moral philosophy was less frequently subject to the Renaissance ridicule that plagued his physics. According to Charles Schmitt, the *Ethics* was by far Aristotle’s most popular work in the sixteenth century in both Protestant and Catholic circles, whether at university or in extra-academic settings.²⁴ Among the ways in which Renaissance Aristotelianism in both Latin and English differed from its medieval predecessor was the fact that, according to Schmitt, “the works on moral philosophy were given a great degree of emphasis.”²⁵ This shift correlates with how Aristotle was being redefined both in the university curriculum and in the English print market. Though the natural philosophical texts continued to be regularly taught at university, mid-sixteenth-century philosophical requirements at Oxford listed by name only the *Problemata*, *Moralia*, and *Politica* rather than the *Physics*, *De anima*, and the other so-called *parva naturalia* that had made up the core of the medieval arts curriculum.²⁶ In contradistinction to the university presses in Oxford and Cambridge that printed the Latin texts of

Aristotle's science, more popular printers concentrated on bringing his works of moral philosophy to a wider audience.²⁷ An epitome of the *Nicomachean Ethics* first appeared in English in 1547.²⁸ In 1598, the London printer Adam Islip printed the first English translation of Aristotle's *Politics*.²⁹ These works on the philosophy of human affairs were printed alongside English versions of the spurious works such as the *Problemata* and the *Secretum secretorum*, miscellanies of political and natural knowledge.³⁰ By way of contrast, the publication of an English version of Aristotle's *Physics* would have to await the nineteenth century.³¹ By the end of the sixteenth century, Aristotle looked much more like a moral rather than a natural philosopher if one were to judge him primarily on the basis of what was available in English print.

The semantic and economic changes outlined all too briefly here contributed, to varying extents, to the silencing of Lady Nature's voice in the early modern period; at the same time, they influenced how sixteenth-century literary writers viewed those medieval poets who had ventriloquized her. As early modern writers began to understand philosophy differently—to see it as primarily moral rather than an undertaking that needed to be framed equally as moral *and* natural—so too they began to frame medieval poets' investment in it in terms more congenial to their own understanding. Whereas the early fifteenth-century poet Thomas Hoccleve had praised Chaucer as the English heir to Aristotle's "philosophie," late sixteenth-century readers such as Sir Philip Sidney and George Puttenham did not single out this aspect of his poetry for praise. They celebrated the medieval poet as an ethicist and rhetorician rather than a writer interested in questions of natural philosophy. Sidney's "The Defence of Poetry" (1581) and Puttenham's "The Art of Poesie" (1589) gave voice to a self-consciously classicizing idea of poetry as a practice that moves men to virtuous action. On this view, the poet mediates between divinely inspired forms and their manifestations in the poet's own experience. In the lamentable landscape of earlier English poetry, Chaucer is singled out as an exception, but only to have Sidney proceed to damn his medieval predecessor with faint praise: it is only Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* that he finds impressive and even then only to the questionable extent that the poem conforms itself to the humanist literary standards he has outlined.³² According to Sidney, poetry, like all art, properly takes nature as its object, but poetry's goal is no longer to interrogate the line between the human and the natural but to create "a second Nature," one that surpasses the realm of everyday experience, the realm that was of such great interest to Chaucer and his contemporaries. Poetry outpaces natural philosophy for Sidney because, in Elizabeth Spiller's phrase, its "world-making" produces truer forms of knowledge than mere interpretation based on sensory experience could ever reveal.³³ In order to arrive at truth, poetry must transcend the physical world; such a vision could not easily acknowledge (much less account for) Chaucer's conspicuous

and repeated interrogation of what the human subject might share with the everyday drives common to both the material world and all animate creatures.

In addition to the redefinition of both poetry and philosophy as objects of study, there was yet a further distinction that would, over time, make Chaucer's manifest interest in Aristotelian science less comprehensible to most of his early modern readers: the increasing separation of the vocation of the poet from that of the natural philosopher. These two practices were coming to be seen as discrete endeavors despite the fact that, as the work of Elizabeth Spiller, Peter Dear, and others makes clear, early modern literature and science regularly employed many of the same rhetorical strategies and generic forms.³⁴ For literary writers such as Sidney, nature can be the proper subject of poetry, but it is the poet's job to transform what he finds there, rather than to explain or to interrogate it. Sidney famously claimed that natural and moral philosophers only "follow nature," while the poet, "lifted up with the vigor of his own invention," creates a more true nature.³⁵ At the same time that Sidney and Puttenham were redefining the vocation of the poet in practical, humanist terms, the persona of the natural philosopher was being similarly redefined in such a way as to reject the clerical model of natural philosophy associated with the scholastic practice of Aristotelianism. Early modern attempts to reform the practice of both poetry and natural philosophy emphasized "practice," but in the name of showing how different their endeavors were from other endeavors that similarly took nature as its putative subject. As the historian of science Stephen Gaukroger has argued, writers such as Francis Bacon attempted to reform not just the discipline of natural philosophy but the image of its practitioners as well, emphasizing active engagement with the world in lieu of theoretical disputation at a remove from experience.³⁶ Gaukroger quotes the seaman and instrument maker Robert Norman whose 1581 treatise on magnetism and navigation, *The Newe Attractiue*, claims that he will forego "barely tedious coniectures or imaginations" and instead posit his arguments on "experience, reason and demonstration."³⁷ Norman's desire to show the rigorous grounding of his physical knowledge was no doubt intended, as Gaukroger asserts, to weed out the amateur "enthusiasts" from the professionals. However, the disdain for "coniectures or imaginations" is also a dig at the medieval scholastic thought experiment that was commonly used as proof in scientific arguments, a habit regularly ridiculed by early modern natural philosophers.³⁸

As the chips of imagination get pushed to the poetic side of the table, early modern poets and natural philosophers no longer shared a vision of nature *secundum imaginationem*; the ubiquitous medieval thought experiment makes fewer appearances in the empirical arena, just as the dream vision cedes its preeminence as the poetic vehicle of choice for establishing moral truths. It is thus perhaps unsurprising that, with the

notable exception of Gabriel Harvey, Chaucer's early modern readers did not see him as Aristotle's heir, an insight obscured in part by a growing investment in poetry's autonomy from natural philosophy. In an early English print market where Aristotle morphs from a natural into a moral philosopher, Chaucer too is translated from a poet with significant interests in the workings of the physical environment to "our English Homer."³⁹ Chaucer's interest in nature is now recast in a distinctly Sidneian, rather than Aristotelian, vein.

Chaucer's reception is just one aspect of the complex early modern afterlife of the medieval engagement with a personified nature. As an emblem for debates about what the human being shared with the natural world around it, medieval Lady Nature—both Chaucer's version and its many late medieval analogues—was tied to the reception of the scholastic science associated with Aristotle's name. With the collapse of the controversies she had come to symbolize—Augustinian as opposed to Aristotelian ways of knowing nature; debates over the nature of the human will and inclination—both Lady Nature and her frequent medieval consort, the personified Aristotle, fell silent. It would be easy to portray them as victims of the new strictures of experimental science, the vagaries of the print market, or anti-Catholic stereotypes. Nature's silencing, however, was not a cause-and-effect phenomenon. Instead this poetic shift away from personification allegory as the vehicle for imagining the relation of the natural and the human participates in the many, sometimes conflicting, intellectual currents of its day. For seventeenth-century natural philosophers such as Robert Boyle, personifying Nature made her seem too contingent, too likely to work in ways that could not be understood through an experimental methodology. In *A Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Receiv'd Notion of Nature* (1686), Boyle archly sums up the "vulgar" view of nature: "Nature is a most wise being, that does nothing in vain, does not miss of her ends, does always that which (of the things she can do) is best to be done, and this she does by the most direct or compendious ways, neither employing any things superfluous, nor being wanting in things necessary." His ironic tone intensifies as he explains that "she abhors a vacuum, making particular bodies act contrary to their own inclinations and interests, to prevent it, for the public good."⁴⁰ What renders this nature ridiculous is that she acts so much like, well, a *she*. Though she is wise, she is also fickle. Custom, according to Boyle, encourages us to speak of things done by nature (or, more properly, Nature) that are in reality done by causal physical agents. He rejects the idea of goddess Natura for several reasons. Such a personified Nature is unnecessary, extra-scriptural, and her quasi-autonomous existence would impinge on God's omnipotence. Moreover, Boyle objects specifically to the ontological indeterminacy of scholastic nature: "For it appears not clearly, whether they [scholastics] will have it to be a corporeal substance, or an immaterial one, or some such thing, as may seem to be betwixt both."⁴¹ It

was precisely this indeterminacy that had made a personified Nature so valuable to medieval poets and natural philosophers alike. In place of her, Boyle argued for nature as a divinely designed machine, one that organized “brute matter” according to “laws of local motion.”⁴² For Boyle and like-minded thinkers, she was an it; the natural world, a decidedly material one.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not, of course, have a homogeneous vision of a “static” nature. We could point to the Cambridge Platonist Henry More who, in dialogue with Spenser, sought to model a revitalized nature—one with motive powers and energies—over and against the mechanical one being formulated by Descartes and Newton.⁴³ Perhaps the major continuity between medieval and early modern representations of nature is to be found in the way that poetic accounts of nature were always already natural philosophical ones and vice versa, even at those moments when each was loudly declaring its independence from the other.

So Lady Nature vanishes from early modern literature, not quite as abruptly as she does from atop Spenser’s Arlo Hill but almost as completely. The dream vision—the parade car in which medieval Nature rode, top down, for so long—would be retired, and other generic forms, such as the pastoral, would take its place. While both medieval personifications of nature and early modern pastoral are varieties of mediated nature, they each articulate a distinct set of questions that can be asked of the natural world.⁴⁴ Medieval Lady Nature was a place from which to speak about how the mechanics of human erotic desire participated (or not) in a wider set of natural inclinations, a question that led to the philosophical problem of human exceptionalism. In assuming Nature’s moral authority, the medieval poet acted less as a mediator for something outside himself than as an amplifier for what was already within. Imagining the material world in human form—the “lesse world” that epitomizes the macrocosm—is, on the one hand, a species of hubris; on the other hand, it affirms the coextensiveness of the human and nonhuman worlds. For Renaissance pastoral writers, by contrast, the human was often seen to be in nature but not of it: the shepherd was actually the courtly exile; the hunter, the tyrant of the polis; the deer, the oppressed citizen. In the pastoral mode, nature is a collection of qualities (or antitheses) rather than a coherent place from which to speak about either the human or the cosmic. Since early modern nature is often portrayed as a force external to the human, it was less frequently a place from which to launch questions about how the human will was potentially free or subject to inclinations that were also thought to direct the rest of the universe. As Nature moves from a nominalization to a series of discrete adjectives, from personification to pastoral, she loses her ability to pronounce on what is truly human along the way.

Ironically, the rise of humanism did away with the medieval tendency to bestow a human form on nature. While “humanism” cannot be considered an agent of change in its own right, one way to conceive of the shift traced here would be to track Nature’s demise in relation to the rise of this intellectual formation in broad terms. The Renaissance movement to bring “the human” to center stage pushed a personified Nature to the margins, militating against a shared, anthropomorphized persona.

The disappearance of Lady Nature together with the disappearance of the medieval drama of inclination in which she played a leading role are both effects of the early modern tendency to separate off the human from the nonhuman, a split whose mechanics have been described from a variety of disciplinary standpoints. Bruno Latour’s influential narrative *We Have Never Been Modern* argues that early modern culture engaged in strategies of “purification,” whereby nature and science were cordoned off from society and the individual self. For Latour, this desire to put everything in one of two mutually exclusive buckets, culture or nature, inadvertently resulted in the creation of hybrids whose hyphenated nature had to be disavowed in order to keep the engine of modernity smoothly ticking over.⁴⁵ In more recent work, Latour has returned to the effects of this separation for contemporary politics and our relation to the environment: “Once you begin to trace an absolute distinction between what is deaf and dumb and who is allowed to speak, you can easily imagine that this is not an ideal way to establish some sort of democracy.... But no doubt that it is a fabulously useful ploy, invented in the seventeenth century, to establish a political epistemology and to decide who will be allowed to talk about what, and which types of beings will remain silent.”⁴⁶ Even if we disagree with the wider outlines of Latour’s narrative (or his locating its origins in the seventeenth century), his point here resonates with the fate of personified nature. The devoicing of Nature, the moment she becomes “deaf and dumb,” can be read as part of this broader separation of humanistic pursuits from “science,” the dividing off of those things that could be known about the material world from those things that could be known about the human. Among these dichotomous labors, we could include attempts by Philip Sidney to partition off “poetry” from “science” and attempts by Bacon and later empiricists to “demystify” natural philosophy.

While it is important to remember that this version of dualism was never complete nor did it fully inform subsequent modes of Enlightenment thinking (of which there were many, sometimes competing), we can see the early modern reception of Aristotle as yet another site where this drive to purification was at work.⁴⁷ If English readers had available to them in translation the works of social analysis (*Nicomachean Ethics*, *Politics*) but not natural philosophy (the *Physics* and the *libri naturales*), this division was reproduced in early modern intellectual life, as Aristotelian ethics began to be separated off from the physics on which it was based. For medieval

scholastics such as Aquinas, the beauty and coherence of the Aristotelian worldview lay in its rings of concentric causation: just as the physical world moves and changes in accordance with final ends, so too human moral behavior is oriented by similarly teleological drives. For such writers, ethics was thought to grow out of physics, and, in some cases, to be causally related to it. When, as we have seen, Aquinas imagines the human will as acting in accord with inclinations similar to those that structured the rest of the created world—differing only in the capacity of the being in which the inclinations inhered—he assumes a model of the human defined by analogy (drives function in the same way in different categories of being) and overlap (ontological categories differ in degree rather than in kind and are continuous across the *scala naturae*).⁴⁸ The early modern period saw the gradual dismantling of the physics that licensed this idea of the human even as the ethics remained, a disjunction that, according to the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, resulted in an incoherent moral system that had lost touch with its foundation in the material world.⁴⁹ Medieval poets, theologians, and natural philosophers, on the other hand, imagined the contest between natural determinism and the human will as one that had both physical and moral consequences. Arguments in one domain thus often spread to and influenced the other. Such analogous understandings, even when contested, would make less frequent appearances after the Enlightenment when the world of physical science (natural philosophy) and the human (theology, poetry) had been effectively partitioned off from one another due, in part, to a desire to quantify entities that had not previously been subject to quantification. We hear the echoes of this zealous attempt at cleansing the unquantifiable out of the nonhuman in Galileo’s well-known assertion that natural philosophy—by which he meant the things of the cosmos—is written in the “language of mathematics.”⁵⁰

This bifurcated model of a denatured humanity and a dehumanized nature—a split proleptically anticipated in Guillaume de Deguileville’s fourteenth-century *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* and later in Lydgate’s fifteenth-century translation of it—was to have lasting effects within the literary sphere. If Chaucer’s most influential early modern readers had difficulty in seeing him as Aristotle’s heir, modern critics have had a similarly difficult time understanding why some medieval poets were deeply invested in seemingly academic debates about necessity and physics and why some medieval theologians and philosophers were interested in fiction—in the hypothetical case—as a tool of demonstration. The loss of this particular imaginative platform shared by both poetry and science resulted not only in the loss of medieval Lady Nature, but also in a literary history that takes physics seriously as a topic for poetry, whether it is voiced by abstract allegories, birds, or even dreaming humans. Modern literary studies is one place where physics and fiction can be put back into meaningful conversation with one another, where we can see them as mutually

illuminating interpretive tools.

The unraveling of the old humanist certainties offers a chance to look afresh at what premodern models of nature have to offer to more recent models of environmental criticism, in particular the strain identified with a “posthumanism” that emphasizes the nonexceptional nature of the human in relation to the nonhuman world as well as the multiple intimacies and adjacencies through which we are embedded in that world.⁵¹ Some of this criticism has polemically called for doing away with the concepts of the human and nature as they have been understood in the Enlightenment project. In a series of books and articles, most prominently, *Ecology Without Nature* and *The Ecological Thought*, the literary critic Timothy Morton has argued that modern views of nature need to disencumber themselves of the Romantic conception of nature, one that makes the human the benchmark of the material world.⁵² For Morton and for critics like him, much ecological writing (both literature and criticism) attempts either to assimilate nature or to assert its fundamental alterity and hence unavailability. Nature must be given up because, as a term, “it holds us back from meaningful engagement with what, in essence nature is all about: things that are not identical to us or our preformed concepts.”⁵³ If, for an earlier generation of environmental critics, there was no bad nature, only good nature exploited by bad humans, now nature itself has become the ideological dummy, the ventriloquized “moral authority” that alternates between telling us how things are and how things ought to be, between the descriptive and the prescriptive moods. This “dummy” Nature is, according to Morton and others, the real danger.

One of the axiomatic truths of much modern criticism, environmental and otherwise, is that anthropomorphization is always bad. It is the worst kind of magical, narcissistic thinking: imagining nature as a human being puts the “me” back in mimesis. Hostility to anthropomorphization occurs in many disciplines and across many periods, from Descartes to Nietzsche to Stephen Jay Gould. Feminist environmental critics such as Rosi Braidotti are also made uneasy with the deep ecology movement whose naive monism, according to Braidotti, “promotes full-scale humanization of the environment.”⁵⁴ Timothy Morton believes that, like the term “nature” itself, anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism are not useful to modern critics: “they beg the question of what precisely counts as *human*, what counts as nature.”⁵⁵ This hostility toward the anthropomorphic makes strange bedfellows of environmental critics and the Enlightenment thinkers whom they otherwise seek to debunk, writers such as Thomas Hobbes who had ridiculed medieval theories of natural motion by objecting to the scholastics who posited a shared agency between the human and the inhuman realms, who acted “as if stones and metals had a desire, or could discern the place they would be at, as man does.”⁵⁶ For Enlightenment critics, anthropomorphism was the sign that the human had not been sufficiently purified out of nature, that nature was not autonomous enough.

Paradoxically, many modern environmental critics who believe the opposite (that the human is ontologically identical with much of the nonhuman world) still applaud a seek-and-destroy hermeneutics whose goal is to ferret out an insidious and potentially infectious anthropomorphism.

Yet it is worth remembering that, for medieval popular and academic writers, anthropomorphic personification was a useful form of critique rather than just description or representation. Nature acquired a human form as medieval writers dressed her in a series of competing physical and metaphysical “outfits.” For a writer such as Jean de Meun or Chaucer, Lady Nature did not speak with a unified voice nor were readers supposed to agree with all that they heard. Nature could reveal the problems with the human desire to see itself as exceptional to the rules that governed the rest of nature or to make nature into an alibi for contradictory precepts. What initially seems a blatantly exceptionalist way of thinking about Nature—a nature speaking back to us in our own voice—could, at certain times and in certain hands, be a tool for teasing apart the very subtle ontological threads that link earthly creatures of different kinds. For such writers, this anthropomorphized voice was used not just to explore what counts as human and what as nature but also to interrogate the criteria by which we reflexively make such judgments. The hesitations of modern critics are understandable, since such personifications frequently became the basis of hierarchies that oppressed many groups, from women to non-Christians to the entirety of the nonhuman natural world. Yet the silencing of Nature’s voice in the early modern period is not something wholly to be celebrated. The loss of the human voice also entailed the loss of the nonhuman voice. The inhuman was silenced as well, or, at best, it was expressed in mathematics, reducing the nonhuman to only those qualities that could be expressed in an equation.

The problem of anthropomorphism has provoked debate among recent environmental critics, with some attempting to rehabilitate it in the name of a productive dialogism between the human and inhuman others. Starting from the premise that anthropomorphism has historically been used “to delegitimize intentional description of non-human others,” Val Plumwood argues for a more encompassing definition of agency, one that could legitimately extend to nonhuman actors.⁵⁷ Plumwood claims that the situatedness of all knowledge inevitably demands that we render concepts in ways that make sense to us as humans, and here she invokes an analogy with cross-cultural communication: certainly a European representation of a non-European could be colonial and repressive; however, “there can be no general argument that such cross-cultural perspectives presenting another’s viewpoint are deceptive or illegitimate.” Crossing the anthropocentric boundary, she argues, entails “a double movement that seeks to understand both similarity and difference in dynamic tension.”⁵⁸ She distinguishes between an anthropocentric act and attributing to this act a necessarily and

inevitably “damaging” interpretation. Anthropomorphism certainly entails ethical danger—and this book includes several examples of Nature being used to speak for the normative and the moral in an exclusionary fashion. But Nature’s medieval voice also allowed poets, philosophers, and theologians to reveal the incoherency or instability of these same normative assumptions. In this mode, personification is critique; it is the representation of the nonhuman world in intentional terms that acknowledges the indeterminacy of the translation. It is, in Plumwood’s model, a speaking *with* rather than a speaking *for*. What is most compelling about the medieval desire to hear Nature speak may be that this voice has the potential to go beyond critique. When nature speaks for humans and humans for nature, when birds speak for humans and humans for birds, or even when humans, compared to stones, lose their voices and instead listen to speaking stones, all of these moments model a bivalent impersonation that makes available for criticism cultural assumptions about where the human ends and where nature starts. What it does not do is assume the ontological equivalency of categories understood as continuous and analogous but not identical. Instead, we get a model of bivalent bioegalitarianism, one that offers an avenue for interrogating our modern ontological assumptions about what is shared among human and nonhuman beings.

This model may be usefully brought to bear on the “new ecologies” that have largely embraced an ontological plenitude that eschews most forms of inclination and determinism. The current theoretical consensus, whether traced to Deleuze and Guattari, Manuel DeLanda, or Donna Haraway, assumes that the human is a subset of the animal, no more or less privileged than other life forms.⁵⁹ Though methodologically and philosophically diverse, these posthumanists often critique Enlightenment nature from the perspective of a Spinozan monism that effectively denies most ontological differences among the human and nonhuman worlds.⁶⁰ In this vein, Timothy Morton encourages us to replace the Book of Nature with the idea of a mesh, “a nontotalizable, openended concatenation of interrelations that blur and confound boundaries at practically any level: between species, between the living and the nonliving, between organism and environment.”⁶¹ Taking his cue from recent advances in evolutionary biology, he sees ontology as a set of horizontal rather than hierarchical practices: things can morph into other things without having to give notice to any higher power directing growth and becoming, whether such a higher power is imagined as a divine mind, the imperatives of Darwinian reproduction, or genetic homeostatic cooperation. Similarly, the political theorist Jane Bennett, following Deleuze and Guattari, argues that instead of seeing ontological categories as discrete or even opposed, it is more accurate to see things as assemblages of many states of being simultaneously; her examples include a human, which is not just body and soul but “memories, intentions, contentions, intestinal bacteria, eyeglasses, and blood sugar,” and the electric grid composed as it is

of “a volatile mix of coal, sweat, electromagnetic fields, computer programs, electron streams, profit motives, heat, lifestyles, nuclear fuel, plastic, fantasies of mastery, static, legislation, water, economic theory, wire, and wood.”⁶² In Bennett’s examples, things are contingent groupings liable to change constituents at any moment but to remain at all times recognizably themselves. If Bruno Latour encourages us to see the world as a “parliament of things,” Jane Bennett embraces rule by parliamentary coalition. What these models share is a belief that contingency is a privileged attribute of the interactions between nature and the human. Whether these models travel under the sign of Deleuze and Guattari’s “rhizome,” Bennett’s “vibrant matter,” or Morton’s “liquid life,” each decisively rejects taxonomic modes of understanding natural order as well as any ontological hierarchy in favor of nonhierarchized difference. For these critics, such contingency guarantees the nontranscendence of the human.

As a way to repair the Enlightenment split between the human and nature, this critical model has much to commend itself; however, it also lacks the ability to answer some basic questions that medieval models of nature found to be quite pressing, most specifically the problem of causation. Aristotelian natural philosophy, based as it was on substance ontology, had a clear answer for causation: what was mutual among different kinds of things was not substance per se but inclination. The acorn becomes the oak because it contains within it an inherent inclination to realize its final form. In the hands of a philosopher and theologian such as Aquinas, this system allowed him to imagine how the soul could exercise free will—be free to choose to sin or to abstain from sin—even as it was influenced by physical factors, factors that pressured but did not determine its course of action. In the hands of a philosophically minded fiction writer such as Jean de Meun, this teleological insight invited him to question an ecclesiastical orthodoxy that allowed for some natural determinism in the human realm (in our humoral makeup and in medical treatment, for instance) but not in others (sexual regulation or the spiritual will). In giving more agency to things, medieval Aristotelians did not feel that they were giving away their humanity; agency after all is not a finite resource like fossil fuels or diamonds. Instead, this shared circuit of being encouraged them to ask complex ontological questions about how humans and things interacted without having to cordon off one from the other (like some Enlightenment writers do), or, conversely, without having to reduce one to the other (like some posthumanist environmental critics do).

As a site for imagining alternative conceptions of material nature, both popular and academic medieval writings have much to contribute to modern conversations about materiality. What they share with the New Materialisms is a desire to move the conversation beyond the strictly human-and-subjectoriented ontologies characteristic of modernity. They go beyond this conversation, moreover, in showing us that this break is already present at

the root of Aristotelian sciences. Aristotelian ideas about substantial forms, for instance, offer a theory of durable identity and continuous matter that could provide alternatives to either the Cartesian separation of mind and matter or the Deleuzian “flat ontology.” Due to the mutual predisposition of form and matter, the medieval model need not posit either a radical break between mind and matter (Descartes) or an undifferentiated network lacking an explanation for change or complexity (Deleuze) in order to explain the relation of human to nonhuman, ethics to things. A return to medieval conversations about nature offers another avenue for bridging the gap described earlier, since, for medieval scholastics, metaphysics and politics both grew out of Aristotelian physics. Such a return also has the potential to historicize a conversation that usually ignores pre-Cartesian ideas of being (or, if they do look earlier, they reflexively jump back to Lucretius).⁶³ Finally, since the posthumanist agenda that is ubiquitous in contemporary cultural studies largely depends on either Kantian or Deleuzian formulations of materiality, a return to prehumanist materialisms can bring contemporary commitments into sharper relief. To return to medieval-fiction making in the context of its physics is to rethink the manifold and mutually implicated relation of inwardness to exteriority. As the Latin *implicare* suggests folding, it is the case that the human and the nonhuman are folded together differently in the late medieval period than they are today. The “old” medieval materialisms have the capacity to help us reformulate the gap between self and world, language and object, politics and metaphysics. Medieval metaphysics was not one of the “gap,” or even of the posthumanist adjacency, it was instead a metaphysics of “overlap,” one dedicated to outlining where and to what extent ontological categories were coextensive with one another.

A return to medieval nature is useful not only for seeing what was lost in the early modern silencing of Nature’s human voice but also for analyzing the consequences of the continued suppression of this voice, even when done with the best of critical intentions. I say this neither to discredit the project of posthumanism nor to romanticize the Aristotelian understanding of the natural world, but to show that our own recasting of the founding distinctions of modernity is itself an artifact of the history it purports to displace. The dissolution of the humanist legacy offers a chance to formulate yet another relation to nature, reminding us that debates over human exceptionalism have a long genealogy. Such a return suggests that alongside a posthumanism, we should strive to hear the voice of a bivalent prehumanism, an intellectual formation that employed ventriloquism as critique and whose ethics were based on empathetic embodiment. Instead of turning our back on these earlier models of nature, declaring them all hopelessly exceptionalist, teleological, taxonomic, and therefore off-limits, we should instead pay attention to how they parse the problem of the human. Again, this is not a nostalgic call to return to embrace medieval

science as a political model or, even less, to revive personification as an aesthetic imperative; it is instead to recognize that both can be valuable heuristics for exposing the basic tensions inherent in how we moderns look at nature today. Their joint legacy is the sliding scale of likeness and difference on which so many “natural” categories are still predicated. This vision of a world bound together by dynamic lines of shared inclination, affiliations that joined together the existence of rocks, eagles, and scholastic natural philosophers, compels us to ask: is it possible or even desirable to “take nature out of the equation” as Morton urges us?⁶⁴

To listen to Nature’s voice alongside critics such as Plumwood is to hear the murmurings of co-species intimacies that do not just “horizontalize” our relations with nonhumans, declaring our common ground to be only a mutual materiality. Nature’s voice helps us conceive of other mutualities that emerge as we perform the imaginative work of speaking in each other’s voices; not speaking *for* each other but speaking *as* each other. Nature’s voice ultimately reminds us that speaking for the human is just as much of an act of ventriloquism as speaking for the nonhuman. In this mode, personification as a form of intentional translation is critique. What was so powerful about medieval Nature was her ability to perform this critique, to provide a forum to debate the human without discounting observable ontological difference. Nature had the power to put forward a hypothesis about what the human meant, even if her voice was shown to be questionable, unreliable, or at times outright wrong. Hearing this premodern voice now should remind us to be suspicious of theoretical models that insist on the suppression of this voice, on the death of nature, as the price for preserving nature once and for all.

NOTES

"Knowledge, learning, scholarship" in the general sense, followed by (b) "natural science." "Moral philosophy" is a rather distant fourth behind (c) "occult knowledge." Searches in the *MED Corpus* and the Middle English texts on the *English Poetry Database* (2nd ed.) suggest that the unambiguous meaning of "moral philosophy" is comparatively rare up until the middle of the fifteenth century. When Aristotelian moral philosophy is the specific referent, it is often referred to under the heading of 'etik' or 'thewes'; see *MED*, s.vv. 'etik' (n.) and 'theu' (n.), sense 1.

14. Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things*, 2:514, ll. 12–13. Trevisa's phrase translates the Latin phrase "physicam considerationem." *MED*, s.v. 'phisike' (n.), sense 2, notes that Aristotle's *Physics* could be designated by several vernacular titles, including the "bok of phisike natural," "phisikis," and "naturelle þings." Trevisa uses the substantive "phylosophris" to designate Aristotle's *Physics*: "Phylozophris settiþ þre maner kynde of fire" (1:560, ll. 22–23). While the term "philosophie" is the usual Middle English designation for medieval physics, the term "physic" is used on occasion, despite the fact that it more usually refers to medicine; see *MED*, s.v. 'phisike' (n.), sense 2. Examples of "physic" referring to natural philosophy include Shirley's version of the *Secretum secretorum*, which translates the Latin *physicam* with "fisike," or, alternately, in another Middle English manuscript with "philosophye." Similarly, *The Court of Sapience* states that the first branch of philosophy is "natural / Whome folk of Grece clepyn Dame Phisyca" (1584). While there is overlap between the matter of natural philosophy and medicine, medical treatises often distinguish between "philosophers" and "leches"; for examples of this distinction, see *MED*, s.v. 'philosophre' (n., [b]).

15. Higden, *Polychronicon*, 3:363. This linguistic usage is reinforced by the fact that, compared with the *libri naturales*, Aristotle's *Ethics* had relatively less long-standing influence in the university arts curriculum, where they were adopted only in the mid-fourteenth century, more than one hundred years after the *libri naturales* were introduced; on this chronology, see Wieland, "Reception and Interpretation of Aristotle's *Ethics*."

16. Middle English writers such as Thomas Usk and John Gower regularly employed a tripartite definition of philosophy that included the natural, moral, and rational. See, for example, Usk, *Testament of Love*, 3.1.60–61 (p. 127), who notes that "the first spece of philosophie is naturel, whiche in kyndely thinges treten."

17. Grant, *History of Natural Philosophy*, 42–43. Aristotle's definition of "nature as a principle of change" distinguished it from both mathematics and metaphysics, since these latter *scientiae* dealt with unchanging proportions and first principles respectively. It also excluded the more "exact" sciences such as optics, harmonics, and mathematical astronomy (though judicial astronomy was frequently included under its rubric). Aristotle distinguishes those parts of astronomy that are included while excluding mathematics in general from natural philosophy in *Physics* 2.2 (193b23–194a6). Medicine would also seem to belong here; however, Aristotle nowhere includes it, and it was subsequently treated as a separate faculty within the medieval university.

18. Usk, *Testament of Love*, 3.4.231.

19. *Testament of Love* is included in Thynne's 1532 edition of Chaucer's collected works published by Thomas Godfray.

20. See, for instance, Baker, "Chaucer and Moral Philosophy." A notable exception here is Lynch, *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*, 6–11, where she points out that "philosophie" in such instances can be taken to designate its speculative as well as moral branches. Lynch rightly notes that despite several studies documenting Chaucer's interest in and knowledge of scholastic debates, opposition remains to understanding Chaucer's poetry as substantively engaged with scholastic philosophical trends.

21. John Fisher (*John Gower*, 225–26) observes that most Chaucerian uses of "philosophy" and its variants refer to natural philosophy (nineteen out of forty-four); for Fisher, the operative distinction within philosophy, however, is between the moral and intellectual virtues. Thus he concludes that in the *Troilus* passage, Strode is being lauded for

his adherence to “intellectual virtue” more generally.

22. See *Troilus* 5.1857. It is telling that the narrator praises “moral Gower” in the same passage, suggesting the contrapuntal relation between moral and natural philosophy that I discuss below. On the connections between Chaucer and Strode, see Hallmundsson, “Chaucer’s Circle.” Sheila Delany (*Naked Text*, 46–48) rightfully argues that Strode’s philosophical interests are fitting for the issues raised in *Troilus*.

23. For the influence of rhetorical manuals, including Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, on medieval poetry, see Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 28–31; and Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation*. For an understanding of how commentaries on Aristotle’s logical and rhetorical works influenced medieval writers, see the introduction to Copeland and Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*. The influence of the *Nicomachean Ethics* has been documented by several generations of scholars, including Allen, *Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages*; Burnley, *Chaucer’s Language and the Philosophers’ Tradition*; Simpson, *Sciences and the Self*; and Blamires, *Chaucer, Ethics, and Gender*.

24. Grant, *History of Natural Philosophy*, 164–65.

25. On Thomas Aquinas’s discussion of the relation of these *scientiae*, see Weisheipl, “The Relationship of Medieval Natural Philosophy to Modern Science,” 195.

26. See Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*; and MacIntyre, *After Virtue*. To discuss the productive value of aligning physics and ethics is not to discount its potential moral dangers; one need only think of the uses to which physiognomy or eugenics have been put.

27. In making this argument, my book joins recent literary studies of the Renaissance and Enlightenment that tackle the question of materiality in relation to modernity, such as Jonathan Gil Harris’s *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* and Natania Meeker’s *Voluptuous Philosophy*. Unlike these, however, my book argues that it is only in the medieval period that ethics had a direct foundation in the natural sciences, since the movement of both animate beings and inanimate things was governed by similar laws of inclination.

28. *Timaeus*, 28a6. For contrasting interpretations of how “nature” functions in Plato’s account, compare Johansen, *Plato’s Natural Philosophy*, with Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato’s “Timaeus.”*

29. Hadot, *Veil of Isis*, 34. On the popularity of this trope throughout the medieval period, see Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature*, 59–60.

30. Knowlton’s articles include “Nature in Middle English,” “Nature in Earlier Italian,” “Nature in Old French,” and “Nature in Early German.”

31. See Economou, *Goddess Natura*. While Nature had been personified in medieval Latin writings prior to the twelfth century, Peter Dronke argues that it is only with Bernard Silvestris’s *Cosmographia* that she becomes a full-fledged deity, perhaps based on earlier personifications of Terra or the primordial causes found in John Scotus Eriugena’s *Periphyseon*; see Dronke, “Bernard Silvestris, Natura, and Personification.”

32. Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 134.

33. See, for instance, Averroës, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis “De anima” libros*, book 3, comm. 14.

34. For a discussion of the benefits and drawbacks surrounding the use of these labels, see Chapter 2.

35. Some critics (for instance, Bloomfield, “Grammatical Approach to Personification Allegory”) have proposed taxonomies of the prosopopoeia’s medieval uses, analyzing its definition in the rhetorical manuals of Cicero, Quintilian, and their medieval commentators; others have examined how the late medieval trope supplements or, in some cases, challenges modern poststructuralist understandings of personification (for instance, Paxson, *Poetics of Personification*).

36. Camille, “The Iconoclast’s Desire,” 159.

37. On Nature’s role, see Whitman, *Allegory*, esp. 206–7 and 248–49.

38. William of Conches, *Dialogue on Natural Philosophy*, 18.

39. “Concerning Lines, Angles and Figures,” English translation by David C. Lindberg in

Grant, *Source Book in Medieval Science*, 386.

40. In several works, including *Speech and Phenomenon*, *Of Grammatology*, and *Writing and Difference*, Jacques Derrida critiques the Western tradition that, in his view, conflates voice with the metaphysics of presence.

41. See Johnson, *A World of Difference*, 188. Especially relevant are “Women and Allegory” in *The Wake of Deconstruction*, 52–75, and the essays collected in her book *Persons and Things*.

42. Johnson, “Women and Allegory,” 59.

43. Gregory, *Expositio in Canticum canticorum*, §2 (p. 3, ll. 14–15): “Allegoria enim animae longe a deo positae quasi quondam machinam facit, ut per illam leueter ad deum.”

44. See, for instance, Teskey, *Allegory and Violence*.

45. On the medieval thought experiment as occurring *secundum imaginationem*, see Murdoch, “From Social into Intellectual Factors”; and Grant, “Science and Theology in the Middle Ages.” Chaucer’s allusion to the scholastic phrase has also been noted by Grennen, “Science and Poetry in Chaucer’s *House of Fame*,” 42.

46. Grant, *God and Reason*, 220–21.

47. While the eagle claims that his physics lesson has its source in both “Aristotle and daun Platon” (759), this joint attribution should be read in the same spirit as the narrator’s questionable assertion in book 1 that he takes Dido’s story from both Ovid and Virgil, two sources who offer conflicting accounts of her story and differ radically with respect to their sympathy for her plight. The conflation of a recognizably Aristotelian physics with Plato in this way would produce a similar kind of cognitive dissonance in Chaucer’s educated audience.

48. See, for instance, North, *Chaucer’s Universe*, 14–17; Grennen, “Science and Poetry”; Leyerle, “Chaucer’s Windy Eagle”; and Sklute, *Virtue of Necessity*, 39–41.

49. Delany, *Chaucer’s “House of Fame,”* 69–86.

50. Irvine, “Medieval Grammatical Theory,” 862–70.

51. The Aristotelian text is *De anima*, 2.8 (419b4–421a7). Thomas Aquinas’s discussion of the rock passage is found in his commentary, 2.16.169–83; see *Commentary on Aristotle’s “De anima,”* 232. Critics have found comedy in the eagle’s ostensibly sophistic reduction of voice to “mere” sound; yet this position was regarded by many Aristotelian commentators on *De anima* (including Aquinas) as quite legitimate. Rebecca Davis (“Fugitive Poetics,” 106–11) reminds us that this idea of inclination is also found in Augustine as well as Boethius. My work follows in the vein of Chaucer critics who have taken seriously Chaucer’s engagement with contemporary physics. Grennen (“Science and Poetry”) argues that Chaucer drew on Walter Burley’s commentary on the *Physics*, while Gabrovsky (*Chaucer the Alchemist*, 29–40) suggests that the eagle’s speech reflects Chaucer’s knowledge of the Oxford Calculators’ arguments about motion and velocity. Like Grennen and Gabrovsky, I believe that Chaucer was interested in these arguments; however, my own sense is, as I argue below, that Chaucer was more interested in the conceptual implications of these theories for human-nonhuman relations than in specific debates within late fourteenth-century mechanics.

52. See *The Middle English “Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy”*; and the section “Le lieu et ses propriétés” in Évrart de Conty’s *Le Livre des Eschez amoureux moralisés* (218–23). On the vernacularization of physics more generally, see Cornish, “Vulgarizing Science.”

53. *De caelo*, 4.1 (307b29–308a4).

54. *ST* 1a2ae.26.1.

55. See Hoffman, “Reasons, Causes, and Inclinations,” 162.

56. *ST* 1a2ae.26.1.

57. For a discussion of the 1277 condemnation, see [Chapter 2](#).

58. Briefly, Ockham argued that natural philosophy was of limited value, since the divine will could change the physical world at any moment; writers like Bradwardine, on the other hand, were committed to an Aristotelian framework even as their mathematical models revised it. On the arguments and points of contact among such writers on the

question of the rational will, see Gelber, *It Could Have Been Otherwise*.

59. Perler, "Skepticism," 384.

60. For a discussion of "climate of opinion," see Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 3.

61. Gillian Rudd considers the medieval tropology of nature in her book *Greenery*. Michel Zink, *Nature et poésie*, similarly traces the imagery of nature (the spring opening, the sounds of bird song) in French literature from the troubadours to the *Roman de la Rose*.

62. This condemnation was the most far-reaching statement of the dangers posed by Aristotle's nature to orthodox religious accounts of what nature meant and the human place with respect to it. The condemnation emphasized that man was not subject to the same types of laws that governed the rest of nature (for example, the movement of the elements and the planets, which were thought to direct earthly occurrences) and that the human will was in all ways free from such natural influence. It also stated that natural philosophy and the application of causal reasoning to theological questions posed a danger to religious orthodoxy as well as to a belief in God's omnipotence. The reach of these anti-Aristotelian sentiments made itself felt in England almost immediately, as the archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Kilwardby, issued his own condemnations of Aristotle's *Physics* following closely upon Tempier's censure. The import of 1277 is discussed in [Chapter 2](#).

63. The phrase figures polemically in Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature*. Merchant's work was questioned by some historians of science, particularly defenders of Francis Bacon, and a summary of the "pro-Baconian" position is found in Vickers, "Francis Bacon." The significant impact of Merchant's work is assessed more generally and more sympathetically in a "Focus" symposium entitled "Getting Back to *The Death of Nature*: Rereading Carolyn Merchant," *Isis* 97, no. 3 (2006).

64. The mechanical philosophy emphasized "force" rather than inclination or place; see Shapin, *Scientific Revolution*.

CHAPTER 1. FIGURING PHYSIS

1. For example, the substantial scientific digression that ends the account of St. Michael in the metrical *South English Legendary* (British Library Harley 2277) discusses meteorology, planetary influences, and the tripartite division of the soul among other topics; see St. Michael, Pt. 3, ll. 391–796 (2:414–28). Written ca. 1300, this text is arguably the earliest piece of scientific writing in English; see Wright's introduction in *Popular Treatises on Science*, xiii. Another example is found in the Middle English *Fürstenspiegel*, "The iii considerations right necessarye to the good governaunce of a prince," where ethical considerations are grounded in a Neoplatonic understanding of man's material place in the natural world, foregrounding his status as "the lesse world" from which "he hath a maner of participacion with all thinges conteyned in the worlde"; see *Four English Political Tracts*, 182–83. Another well-known example would be the "mini-summae" containing Genius's instruction of Amans in natural science in book 7 of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.

2. Latour, *Politics of Nature*, 5.

3. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 183, 193–94.

4. Alan of Lille, "Omnis mundi creatura," 544.

5. Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," 7.

6. See Vickers, *English Science*, 8–18; and Dear, *Literary Structure of Scientific Argument*.

7. See Chenu, *La théologie au douzième siècle*, 21. Chenu's influential formulation has been revisited by Andreas Speer, "The Discovery of Nature," esp. 138.

8. Dronke, "Bernard Silvestris, Natura, and Personification"; and Economou, *Goddess Natura*, 58.

9. The classic studies on twelfth-century Neoplatonism are Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society*; Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*; and Stock, *Myth and Science in the Twelfth Century*.

10. On the translation history of Aristotle out of Greek and Arabic into Latin, see Dod, "Aristoteles Latinus."

11. Aristotle discusses his theory of causation at greatest length in *Physics* 2.3.

12. On Vincent of Beauvais, see the essays collected in Paulmier-Foucart, Lusignan, and Nadeau, *Vincent de Beauvais*. On medieval encyclopedias more generally, see the essays collected in Binkley, *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts*. While not university texts per se, these encyclopedias were often used by university students in their studies and by preachers in composing sermons. Encyclopedias such as Honorius of Autun's *Elucidarium* and his *Imago mundi*, Alexander Neckam's *De naturis rerum*, and Bartholomeus Anglicus's *De proprietatibus rerum* were regularly found in monastic and cathedral libraries; on this reception, see Twomey, "Towards a Reception History," 344–49.

13. Armstrong and Kay, *Knowing Poetry*, 109.

14. Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World*, 53, 54.

15. On the manuscript history of Gossuin de Metz's encyclopedia, see the introduction to the edition of O. H. Prior; and Connochie-Bourgne, "L'Image du monde, une encyclopédie." In addition to Honorius of Autun, the *Image* also draws significantly on Jacques de Vitry's *Historia Hierosolymitana* and Alexander Neckham's *De naturis rerum*. For a discussion of the illuminations found in Bibliothèque de Rennes MS 593, see Cassagnes-Brouquet, *L'image du monde*. On French encyclopedias more generally, see Langlois, *La connaissance de la nature et du monde*.

16. *Image*, 1.1; p. 61. References to this work are cited by part and chapter followed by the page number in Prior's edition.

17. Armstrong and Kay, *Knowing Poetry*, 110.

18. Cf. Honorius of Autun, *Imago Mundi*, and Alexander Neckham, *De naturis rerum*. Neckham, for instance, opens with a mystical meditation on how episodes of the Old Testament prefigure the Trinity; see *De naturis rerum* 1.1 (pp. 3–11).

19. Barratt, "Spiritual Writings and Religious Instruction," 350. For a description of the manuscript, see *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, 3:1–8.

20. *Image*, 3.10; p. 183.

21. I have only found one other medieval mention of Aristotle's Trinitarianism: Roger Bacon mentions it in a gloss on the *Secretum secretorum* written in the 1270s. See *Secretum secretorum cum glossis et notulis*, ed. Steele, p. 37, ll. 12–27. A much later one can be found in the fifteenth-century scholar and philosopher George of Trebizond, made in the context of the Italian Renaissance conflict between Aristotelians and Platonists; see Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 157. I am grateful to John Monfasani for this later reference.

22. The most elegant and succinct account of the various classical understandings of nature remains Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, esp. 35–79.

23. Neoplatonic texts such as the *Liber de causis* were regularly attributed to Aristotle throughout the medieval period. On the reception of these texts, see Schmitt and Knox, *Pseudo-Aristoteles Latinus*; and Dod, "Aristoteles Latinus." The medieval fortunes of Aristotle and Plato were in part the legacy of their tangled late antique reception; see, for instance, the essays by Hadot, Blumenthal, and Ebbesen in Sorabji, *Aristotle Transformed*.

24. For Peckham's description of events in Paris and Oxford, see his two letters to the bishop of Lincoln in *Registrum Epistolarum Fratris Johannis Peckham*, 3:870–72 and 896–902.

25. For a discussion of this distinction between the two ways of looking at nature in the thirteenth century, see Ehrle, *John Peckham über den Kampf des Augustinismus und Aristotelismus*. For a discussion of how these divisions get nuanced in the fourteenth-century writers Scotus and Ockham, see Marrone, "Aristotle, Augustine and the Identity of Philosophy," in *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277*.

26. Aristotle offers his general account of the four causes in *Physics* 2.3–8 (194b16–199b32). He elaborates on this theory in other places, including *Metaphysics* 5.2 (1013a24–1014a16) and in the *Posterior Analytics* 2.11 (94a20–95a9). The goal of all knowledge,

according to Aristotle, was the investigation of causes: something could be understood only to the extent that *why* it happened was understood. The multiplicity of natural causes was explained in typically human terms: a statue can be said to be “caused” by the bronze out of which it is fashioned (its material cause); however, it is also the result of the idea of the statue in the sculptor’s mind (the formal cause). The art of bronze casting—that is, the knowledge necessary for its manufacture (its efficient cause)—transforms the raw material into the actual statue itself, which was the sculptor’s desired end (the final cause).

27. There has been much debate over the extent to which intellectual history and “history of ideas” share common methodologies; see, for instance, Mandelbaum, “History of Ideas”; and Grafton, “History of Ideas.”

28. Blumenberg, “Nachahmung der Natur,” trans. Anna Wertz, “Imitation of Nature”; and *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt*. For a recent discussion of Blumenberg’s theories of modernity vis-à-vis the premodern, see Cole and Smith, *The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages*.

29. Williams, “Ideas of Nature,” in *Culture and Materialism*; Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*; Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*; and Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*.

30. On these influences, see, for instance, “Symposium on Intellectual History in the Age of Cultural Studies”; and Kelley, “Intellectual History and Cultural History.”

31. Mandelbaum, “History of Ideas,” esp. 62–64.

32. Lovejoy, “Reflections on the History of Ideas,” 4.

33. Williams, *Keywords*, 15–17.

34. Keller’s foundational work on the effects of figurative language in scientific paradigms is found in numerous monographs including *Reflections on Gender and Science*; *Refiguring Life*; and *Making Sense of Life*. For the discussion of gene metaphors, see *Refiguring Life*, chap. 2, “Molecules, Messages, and Memory: Life and the Second Law,” 43–77.

35. Lovejoy, *Great Chain of Being*. For assessments of this work, see Bynum, “Great Chain of Being After Forty Years”; and North, “Some Weak Links in the Great Chain of Being.”

36. Boece, bk. 2, metrum 8, ll. 13–21.

37. *Itinerarium* 1.9 in *Tria opuscula*, 299; trans. Boehner and Hayes, 43.

38. *Itinerarium* 1.8 in *Tria opuscula*, 298.

39. *Metaphysics*, 12.7 (1072b3–4). The Latin text is from the anonymous “middle” version of the *Metaphysics*: *Aristoteles Latinus*, 25.2, p. 213.

40. Bonaventure found this Aristotelian idea particularly distasteful, complaining in his *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* that to imagine God producing motion in this way suggests that he knows nothing about his creation or at least no individual thing and that would be to effectively limit his omniscience.

41. *History of Animals*, 8.1 (588b4–22).

42. Albertus Magnus, *De animalium*, 2.1 (1:162); trans. Kitchell and Resnick, 1:287.

43. *History of Animals*, 1.6 (491a19–22).

44. On the shifting fortunes of the doctrine of the partitive soul, see the essays collected in Perler, *Transformations of the Soul*.

45. Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things*, 1:96–103.

46. Significant discussions are to be found in: Blumenberg, *Lesbarkeit*; Curtius, *European Literature*, 319–26; Pedersen, *Book of Nature*; Pai, “Varying Degrees of Light”; Gellrich, *Idea of the Book*; Hawkes, Newhauser, and Bump, *Book of Nature and Humanity*; and Findlen, “Empty Signs.”

47. Blumenberg, *Lesbarkeit*, 54–56.

48. For a critique of Blumenberg’s genealogy of this metaphor, see Nauta, “A Weak Chapter in the Book of Nature.”

49. Hugh of St. Victor, *De tribus diebus*, 4.94–104, p. 9. On this text, see also Poirel, *Livre de la nature et débat trinitaire au XIIIe siècle*.

50. *De tribus diebus*, 7.247–48, p. 17.

51. Bonaventure, *Breviloquium* 2.12 [“De completionem et ordinationem totius mundi consummati”]: “Creatura mundi est quasi quidam liber, in quo relucet, repraesentatur et legitur Trinitas fabricatrix secundum triplicem gradum expressionis, scilicet per modum vestigii, imaginis et similitudinis.” He then makes the distinction (attributed to Hugh of St. Victor) among carnal sight (that only sees the things of the world); rational sight (that sees the things of the spirit); and a contemplative sight (that views God and those things that are within him). The passage concludes with this caveat based on the limitations of man’s understanding due to the Fall: “Qui quidem oculus contemplationis actum suum non habet perfectum nisi per gloriam, quam amittit per culpam, recuperat autem per gratiam et fidem et Scripturarum intelligentiam, quibus mens humana purgatur, illuminatur et perficitur ad caelestia contemplanda; ad quae lapsus homo pervenire non potest, nisi prius defectus et tenebras proprias recognoscat; quod non facit, nisi consideret et attendat ruinam humanae naturae.”

52. Aquinas follows the Pauline doctrine that God is known from the things he has made; e.g., *ST* 1a.2.2. For an example of how the Book of Nature trope gets used by thirteenth-century encyclopedists, see Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World*, 53–54, which discusses Vincent of Beauvais’s use of it in the prologue to his *Speculum naturale*.

53. Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, 12.15.

54. Alan of Lille, *De planctu naturae*, 1.8.30 (pp. 108–11).

55. Economou, *Goddess Natura*, 72, 98.

56. Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 68. Newman offers the compelling interpretation that Alan’s portrayal of Nature was most likely intended to serve as “a tactful corrective to Platonists who gave [Nature] more [than her due]—including such masters as Bernard Silvestris, Thierry of Chartres, and William of Conches” (72). In this view, Newman follows the lead of Jordan (*Invention of Sodomy*, 87–91), who argues that readers are supposed to recognize Nature’s limitation as a moral guide.

57. Solmsen, “Nature as Craftsman in Greek Thought,” 487.

58. *Image*, 1.8; p. 86.

59. For an alternate reading of Gossuin’s nature, see Connochie-Bourgne, “‘Nature’ et ‘clergie.’”

60. This usage is noted by the *Image*’s editor, O. H. Prior; see *Image*, xiv.

61. See *ST* 1a.105.5. A summary of the implications of the “double causality” inherent in the ax metaphor is found in Gilson, *Thomism*, 214. O. H. Prior speculates that the clear Aristotelian bent of the text could be the result of the author’s contact with the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Arnoul in Metz (*Image*, pp. 31–32). No matter where these Aristotelian tendencies arose, it is clear that the author of *L’image* is much more interested in defining nature in relation to God than either of his primary sources, Alexander Neckham or Honorius of Autun.

62. *Image*, 1.8; p. 86.

63. *Ibid.*, 87.

64. *Physics* 2.1 (192b21–22): “Nature is a principle or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily, in virtue of itself and not accidentally.”

65. While William of Conches is often discussed as a Neoplatonist, he is criticized for excessive rationalism by William of St. Thierry in a letter to Bernard of Clairvaux; see “De erroribus Guillelmi de Conchis” [On the Errors of William of Conches], *PL* 180:333–40. This letter complains, inter alia, that William of Conches believed the first man to be created not by God, but by the intermediary powers of the stars and planets. A useful summary of twelfth-century *physica* can be found in Shank, “Natural Knowledge in the Latin Middle Ages,” 88–89.

66. *ST* 1a.1.9.

67. Best and Marcus, “Surface Reading,” 3. Further citations to the text are made parenthetically. For a discussion of the limits of this mode of reading with respect to

medieval studies, see Schiff, "Resisting Surfaces."

68. Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 48.

69. Bernard Silvestris, *Commentary on Martianus Capella's "De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii,"* 45: "Ceterum cum de anima vel de ethereis aeriisve potestatibus agitur, locum habent integumenta." On the concept of *integumentum* in the twelfth century, see Chenu, "La notion d'involucrum," 75–79.

70. On the practice of *lectio divina*, see Leclercq, *Love of Learning*.

71. *Itinerarium* 1.14, in *Tria opuscula*, 301; trans. Boehner and Hayes, 45.

72. Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things*, 1:41, ll. 1–12, 16–18.

73. Keen, *Journey of a Book*, 83–84. Based on the number of extant copies, Twomey claims that Bartholomeus's encyclopedia was the most popular of all encyclopedias in late medieval Britain; see "Towards a Reception History," 362.

74. Similar language, for instance, appears throughout the mini-*summae* of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, book 7. Gower says he will tell his reader about how astronomical signs influence earthly things:

Bot plainly forto make it knowe
Hou that the Signes sitte arowe,
Ech after other be degre
In substance and in proprete
The zodiaque comprehendeth
Withinne his cercle, as it appendeth.
(7.973–78)

75. *Image*, Prologue; p. 59.

76. See, for instance, Stallybrass, "Books and Scrolls," esp. 47–51.

77. *Image*, 1.5; p. 70.

78. Usk, *Testament of Love*, Prologue, ll. 54–59. While Skeat's edition of Usk cites *De animalibus* 1.5 as the source for this passage, the correct citation is *De partibus animalibus* 1.5. Usk may have known a commentary such as that by Albertus Magnus or have known the same version of the biological works circulating under the name *De animalibus* that would have included *Historia animalium*, *De partibus animalium*, and *De generatione animalium*.

79. Albertus Magnus, *Quaestiones super de animalibus*, bk. 11, q. 9. The English translation is adapted from *Questions*, trans. Resnick and Kitchell, 351–52.

80. Alan of Lille, *De planctu naturae*, 1.8.34 (pp. 112–13).

81. Rolle, *Pricke of Conscience*, ll. 7793–804. Once attributed to Rolle, this text is now considered to be the work of an anonymous fourteenth-century author.

82. *Image*, 3.18; p. 196.

83. *Ibid.*, 1.5; p. 70.

84. *Ibid.*, 3.11; p. 186

85. See especially Cronon's discussion of the language of Wordsworth and Thoreau; "Trouble with Wilderness," 12–13.

86. Shapin, *Scientific Revolution*, 37.

87. *Ibid.*, 32.

88. Vickers, *English Science*, 162; excerpts from Sprat's *History of the Royal Society* are found on pp. 160–82.

89. Vickers, *English Science*, 171; emphasis belongs to Sprat.

90. See Vickers, *English Science*, 11–18, who argues that Sprat's advocacy of a "naked" and unornamented prose style participates in a more general mistrust of overtly rhetorical language in the wake of the Civil War. This is an epitome of the argument Vickers had made in his earlier article "The Royal Society and English Prose Style." For alternative interpretations of the seventeenth-century scientific plain style, see Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric*;

and Dear, "Narratives, Anecdotes, and Experiments."

91. Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, 187.

92. *Ibid.*, 186.

93. Braidotti, "Animals, Anomalies, and Inorganic Others," 530.

94. Code, *Ecological Thinking*, 50.

95. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 112.

96. Morton, "Queer Ecology," 275. In his more recent writings, Morton applies his ideas about the mesh of nature to textual environments, arguing that texts function just like living organisms. He insists that "this is not simply an analogy"; see Morton, "Ecology as Text, Text as Ecology."

97. Dear, *Intelligibility of Nature*, 39.

98. Such, at least, is the contention of Merchant, *Death of Nature*.

99. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 220.

100. Quoted in Crane, *Losing Touch with Nature*, 168. For another recent account of the transformation of Aristotelianism in the early modern period, see Martin, *Subverting Aristotle*.

CHAPTER 2. Aristotle's Nature And Its Discontents

Note to epigraph: Higden, *Polychronicon*, 3:361: "Plato domum Aristotelis lectoriam vocaret et frequenter dixit: 'Eamus ad domum lectoris,' et Aristotele absente clamabat 'intellectus abest, surdum est auditorium.'" All references to the *Polychronicon* are taken from this edition. A popular anecdote, this brief account is found in many other Latin *vitae* of Aristotle, including that of Walter Burley, *Liber de vita et moribus philosophorum*, 234: "Plato domum Aristotilis domum lectoris vocabat et sepe dicebat: 'Eamus ad domum lectoris.' Et eo absente a lectione Plato clamabat: 'Intellectus abest, surdum est auditorium.'"

1. While the medieval reception of Aristotle's science will be elaborated in the chapters that follow, I have found the following studies especially useful for understanding the outlines of his general reception. On Aristotle's place in the university curriculum, Grabmann, *Methoden und Hilfsmittel des Aristotelesstudiums im Mittelalter*; Steenberghen, *Aristotle in the West*; Bianchi and Randi, *Le verità dissonanti*; Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars in Fourteenth-Century England*; and Weisheipl, "Curriculum of the Faculty of Arts." The *Secretum* tradition is discussed below. On the mounted Aristotle, see Smith, *Power of Women*.

2. On the manuscript transmission of Aristotle's works, see Dod, "Aristoteles Latinus"; and Schmitt and Knox, *Pseudo-Aristoteles Latinus*.

3. A nuanced discussion of these terms is found in Marrone, "Aristotle, Augustine and the Identity of Philosophy," 277–80. See also Ozment, *Age of Reform*, 9–19, which summarizes Étienne Gilson's older interpretation of the negative effects of the Augustinian triumph in 1277 in order to refute it.

4. For a concise account of the significance of the condemnation, see Grant, "Effect of the Condemnation of 1277." Historians of science argue over the extent of the effects of the 1277 condemnation as well as its role in a larger intellectual crisis; the state of these questions are examined in Flasch, *Aufklärung im Mittelalter?*

5. On the manuscript circulation of the *Polychronicon*, see Hanna, *Pursuing History*, 66–71. The *Polychronicon* was one of several Latin compilations of philosophical *vitae* that drew on similar sources, including the *Compendiloquium de vitis illustrium philosophorum* of John of Wales (ca. 1275) and the anonymous *Liber philosophorum moralium antiquorum* (ca. 1250–1300). On the medieval reception of Aristotle's biography more generally, see Düring, *Aristotle in the Ancient Biographical Tradition*, 164–79. On how Trevisa refashions Higden's vision of what the *summa* could be, see Steiner, "Compensious Genres."

6. On Trevisa's program of translations, see Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience*, 62–100. According to Twomey, *De proprietatibus rerum* was the most popular late

medieval encyclopedia in England; see “Towards a Reception History.” On its reception more generally, see Seymour, *Bartholomaeus Anglicus*.

7. Higden, *Polychronicon*, 3:360.

8. *Ibid.*, 3:370.

9. *Ibid.*, 3:371.

10. *De pomo*, lines 30–32. Latin editions of *De pomo* include those of Plezia in “Aristotelis Qui Ferebatur Liber De Pomo;” and Nardi and Mazzantini in *Il canto di Manfredi e il Liber de pomo*. All citations refer by line number to the edition of Nardi and Mazzantini. English translations are adapted from Rousseau, *The Apple*. A German translation and commentary is also found in Acampora-Michel, *Buch vom Apfel*. For a genealogy of the modern critical editions as well as an edition of the fourteenth-century commentary on *De pomo* by Albert of Saxony, see Rossi, “Odor suus me confortat.”

11. *De pomo*, ll. 354–56.

12. Schmitt and Knox, *Pseudo-Aristoteles Latinus*, 5:51–52. The textual transmission of *De pomo* from Arabic to Hebrew to Latin is outlined in Rousseau, *Apple*, 38–47.

13. *De pomo* is mentioned as an example of pseudo-Aristotle in Williams, “Defining the *Corpus Aristotelicum*,” 45.

14. On these thorny distinctions, see Hoenen and Wisnovsky, “Philosophy and Theology.” On the subservience of the arts faculty to theology, see Weisheipl, “Structure of the Arts Faculty,” 264.

15. *De pomo*, ll. 86–90.

16. *Ibid.*, ll. 138–39.

17. *Ibid.*, ll. 124–27.

18. Harvey, *Scenting Salvation*, 80.

19. *CUP*, 1:138.

20. For Aristotle’s views on the eternal nature of matter and motion, see *Physics* 8.1 (250b10–252b7) and *De caelo* 1.3 (270b1–25); for his view that the affections of the soul are inseparable from the matter in which they are ensouled, see, e.g., *De anima* 1.1 (403a3–403b18).

21. Rousseau, *Apple*, 26.

22. On this genealogy, see the introduction to Rousseau, *Apple*, esp. 21–22.

23. This disputation is mentioned by Rousseau, *Apple*, 39. Included among the appendices in Acampora-Michel’s *Buch vom Apfel* are both Manfred’s letter to the Paris arts faculty (131–37) and an account of the *disputatio* conducted at his court by Peter of Ireland (139–51).

24. On the chronology of the thirteenth-century condemnations, see Steenberghen, *Aristotle in the West*, 66ff. On the earliest condemnations of Aristotle’s natural philosophy between 1210 and 1230, see Grabmann, *I divieti ecclesiastici di Aristotele*.

25. Rousseau, *Apple*, 40–41.

26. On this manuscript, see Gamper, *Katalog der mittelalterlichen Handschriften der Ministerialbibliothek Schaffhausen*, 42–50.

27. *De pomo* is found on fols. 53b–57. For a description of the contents of the manuscript, see *Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, 3:169. The majority of items can be dated to the fourteenth century though there are fifteenth-century chronicle extracts at the beginning of the volume.

28. See Jean LeFèvre, *Le respit de la mort*, ll. 163–74 (p. 9):

Aristote, le bien sage homme,
Ou petit Livret de la Pomme
Qu’i tenoit au lit de sa mort,
Ses comphilosophes amort,
Et par grant raison leur ensaigne,
Disant que nulz d’eulz ne se faigne
Des vices fuir et lessier,

Et des deliz du corps plessier,
Pour approchier son creatour;
Lassus en hault, en noble atour;
Et dit que nulz ne doit fremir
Contre la mort, ne la cremir.

The treatise's early print history similarly suggests that it was read in this context; see, for instance, a Continental incunabulum that prints it with the final part of Jean Gerson's *Opus tripartitum: Tractatus de pomo et morte Aristotelis; cui accedit Gersonii opusculum de Arte moriendi* (Antwerp: Matthias van der Goes, 1487).

29. *De pomo* is found on fols. 214–18r. It is described in *Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, 3:379–83; and in Thomson, *Catalogue of Medieval Manuscripts*, 2:193–95. Written in double columns of Gothic hand, it is similar to other university copies of the *libri naturales* that contain *De pomo*, such as Bodley MS Canon Class lat. 288 and Fitzwilliam Museum MS McClean 154.

30. Thomson, *Catalogue of Medieval Manuscripts*, 2:194–95.

31. Averroës, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis de anima libros*, 3.14: “Credo enim quod iste homo fuit regula in Natura, et exemplar quod Natura invenit ad demonstrandum ultimam perfectionem humanam in materiis.” Those who cited Averroës's epithet approvingly include the fourteenth-century bishop of Durham Richard de Bury, *Philobiblon*, 62: “Archiphilosophus Aristoteles, quem Averroës datum putat quasi regulam in natura.”

32. The censure of Aristotle took several forms, including papal bulls, bishops' letters, and university teaching statutes. Bianchi, *Censure et liberté intellectuelle*, 24–29, differentiates among the import of these various types of proscription.

33. See Bianchi, *Studi sull'Aristotelismo del Rinascimento*, 101–24. Medieval antipathy to Aristotle is also documented in Monfasani, “Aristotle as the Scribe of Nature.”

34. The quodlibetal question is found in Codex Vatican Lateran 1012 and is printed in Imbach, “Aristoteles in der Hölle,” 304–10. The quotation appears on p. 310: “Quod autem dicitur a Commentatore, quod natura in eo demonstravit ultimam perfectionem humanam in natura, istud non multum est probans, quia Commentator volens specialiter habere intellectum Aristotelis simpliciter et expresse unicum animam numero omnium posuit. Unde totus hereticus fuit.” On Averroës's attribution of this idea to Aristotle and Aquinas's defense of Aristotle, see Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 75–76.

35. See Marrone, *Truth and Scientific Knowledge in the Thought of Henry of Ghent*; and Marrone, “Henry of Ghent in Mid-Career.” Marrone is careful to point out the ways in which Henry of Ghent's theory of knowledge draws from both Aristotelian and Augustinian aspects, even as it sought to modify these earlier views.

36. For more extended discussion on the distinction between “Aristotelian” and “Augustinian,” see [Chapter 1](#).

37. The text of the 1270 condemnation is found in *CUP*, 1:486–87. On the relation between these proscriptions and those of 1277, see Wippel, “Condemnations of 1270 and 1277 at Paris.”

38. Bonaventure's *Collationes* had a precedent in Thierry of Chartres's *Treatise on the Six Days of Creation*, whose goal was to harmonize the biblical account of creation with that given in Plato's *Timaeus*. Wippel, “Condemnations,” 181, argues that Bonaventure's writings in the late 1260s influenced the 1270 proscriptions.

39. The Condemnation of 1277 is perhaps the most written about event in the medieval history of science. The text of the 1277 condemnation is found in *CUP*, 1:543–61; and reprinted with commentary in Piché and Lafleur, *La condamnation parisienne de 1277*. The most concise summary of current scholarship on the condemnation can be found in the essays collected in Aertsen, Emery, and Speer, *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277*. Other important works drawn on in this discussion include Hissette, *Enquête sur les 219 articles condamnés*; Thijssen, *Censure and Heresy*; and Bianchi, *Censure et liberté intellectuelle*.

40. See Courtenay, “Dialectic of Omnipotence in the High and Late Middle Ages.”

41. CUP, 1:552, prop. 147. This proposition is closely related to the preceding proposition 146: “Quod possibile vel impossibile simpliciter, id est, omnibus modis, est possibile vel impossibile secundum philosophiam.”

42. Aertsen, Emery, and Speer, eds., *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277*, 3.

43. See, for instance, Duhem’s discussion of how 1277 impacted later discussions of infinity and the eternity of the world in *Études sur Léonard de Vinci*, 2:37–49, and his general conclusion prefaced to his discussion of Richard of Middleton (2:411–13), that the condemnations “imprimèrent à la Science scolastique ... une orientation nouvelle qui l’obligea à s’écarter en bien des points, et non des moins essentiels, de la tradition Aristotélicienne” (412).

44. See Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages*, 64–66; as well as his later *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*.

45. See note 3 above.

46. See, for instance, Sylla, “Autonomous and Handmaiden Science.”

47. Aertsen, Emery, and Speer, *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277*, 6.

48. On this opposition, see Hoenen and Wisnovsky, “Philosophy and Theology,” 692–94.

49. See Libera, *Penser au Moyen Âge*, 147–68; and Bianchi, *Studi sull’Aristotelismo del Rinascimento*.

50. Wippel, “Parisian Condemnations of 1270 and 1277,” 72.

51. On March 18, 1277, Kilwardby condemned thirty articles. On Kilwardby’s academic influence, see Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars in Fourteenth-Century England*, 178–82.

52. Camille, “Illustrations in Harley MS 3487.”

53. For the circumstances surrounding Peckham’s visitation, see Douie, *Archbishop Peckham*. For the intellectual climate that these prohibitions created, see Wilshire, “Oxford Condemnations of 1277”; and North, “Natural Philosophy in Late Medieval Oxford.”

54. CUP, 1:545, prop. 40.

55. See Bianchi, *Studi sull’Aristotelismo*, 43: “l’esaltazione dell’a filosofia come suprema condizione di vita è comune a buona parte dell’aristotelismo del XIII e XIV secolo, ‘averroista’ e non.”

56. CUP, 1:552, prop. 153: “Quod nichil plus scitur propter scire theologiam” (that nothing more is known on account of knowing theology).

57. For Dante’s representation of Aristotle, see *Inferno* 4.131 in *Commedia*, trans. John Sinclair. On the place of Aristotelian thought in the *Commedia*, see, for instance, Boyde, *Dante, Philomythes and Philosopher*.

58. It has been considered most comprehensively by Marenbon, *Pagans and Philosophers*. On the question of the righteous pagan in vernacular literature in particular, see Grady, *Representing Righteous Heathens*; and Vitto, *Virtuous Pagan*.

59. See the useful comparative table in Dod, “Aristoteles Latinus,” 74–79. On Aristotle’s role in the popular tradition of the *Secretum secretorum*, see Schmitt and Knox, *Pseudo-Aristoteles Latinus*, 54–76; Pseudo-Aristotle, *Secretum Secretorum: Nine English Versions*, ed. Manzalaoui (hereafter, Manzalaoui, *Secretum*); Williams, *Secret of Secrets*; and Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature*.

60. On the lack of direct reference to the *Secretum* in university curricula, see Williams, *Secret of Secrets*, 189–90. Williams conjectures that, while not part of the announced curriculum, the *Secretum* could have been the subject of “extraordinary” lectures.

61. See Chroust, “Contribution to the Medieval Discussion.” On the textual tradition hostile to Aristotle, see Imbach, “Aristoteles in der Hölle.” On Aristotle’s Franciscan reception, see Mahoney, “Aristotle as ‘The Worst Natural Philosopher.’” The tradition of these *quaestiones* is discussed further below.

62. See Marenbon, *Pagans*, 168–82, where he outlines the development of this doctrine in commentaries on the *Sentences* and then illuminatingly compares the very different problems posed by Aristotle and Trajan.

63. Imbach, “Aristoteles in der Hölle,” 299. For the background on John and his

quodlibetal questions, see Hödl, “*Quodlibeta* of John of Pouilly.”

64. See Grabmann, “Das Werturteil des Johannes de Polliaco über Aristoteles,” in *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben*, 2:101–2.

65. This claim is reported by John himself; see Hödl, “Die Opposition des Johannes de Polliaco,” 145–46.

66. Quoted in Hödl, “*Quodlibeta* of John of Pouilly,” 209.

67. This line of argument appears again in the mid-fifteenth-century circle of the Cologne Thomists, whose primary intellectual project was the production of Aristotelian commentaries in the defense of the *via antiqui*. Following the “hagiographical tendencies” of *De pomo* and the *Secretum*, Lambert of Cologne mounted a particularly spirited defense of Aristotle; on his *quaestio*, see Moos, “Païens et païens,” esp. 91.

68. On this quodlibetal manuscript and its context, see Duba, “Continental Franciscan *Quodlibeta*”; in an appendix, Duba describes the manuscript’s composition and presents the titles of the *quodlibeta* found there, pp. 640–49.

69. Duba, “Continental Franciscan *Quodlibeta*,” 644.

70. See Imbach, “Aristoteles in der Hölle,” 310: “Tunc ad rationem principalem de illo, quod dicitur in libello De pomo parum valet, quia hiis, que ibi dicuntur, non est fides abhibenda.”

71. See Chroust, “Contribution,” 234.

72. On the textual transmission of the *Secretum*, see the introduction to Manzalaoui, *Secretum*, xiv–xlv. Multiple English versions circulated in fifteenth-century England, including a verse translation ascribed to John Lydgate and presumed to have been completed by Benedict Burgh (British Library, Sloane 2464) and a mid-fifteenth-century prose translation by John Shirley entitled *The Governance of Kynges and of Prynces, cleped The Secrete of Secrete*s (British Library, Additional 5467). The first is printed in Steele, ed., *Lydgate and Burgh’s Secrees of Old Philisoffres*; the second in Manzalaoui, *Secretum*, 227–313.

73. On the context for Shirley’s translation, see Connolly, *John Shirley*.

74. Steele, *Lydgate and Burgh’s Secrees*, p. 4, l. 91.

75. Taken from Shirley’s mid-fifteenth-century prose version, found in Manzalaoui, *Secretum*, p. 255, l. 13–p. 257, l. 6.

76. Bacon’s commentary is reproduced in *Secretum secretorum cum glossis et notulis*, ed. Steele. Among the voluminous criticism on this text, a useful starting point for considering the influence of the *Secretum* on Bacon’s work is Williams, “Roger Bacon and the *Secret of Secrets*.” Also useful is Hackett, “Roger Bacon and the Reception of Aristotle.”

77. See Williams, “Roger Bacon,” 372.

78. Steele, ed. *Secretum Secretorum cum glossis*, p. 36, l. 35–p. 37, ll. 8–10.

79. Manzalaoui, *Secretum*, p. 267, ll. 11, 16.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 269, l. 2. Cf. Shirley’s French source found in Cambridge University Library MS Ff.1.33 and reproduced in Manzalaoui’s *Secretum Secretorum*, “Le Secret des secrés,” on facing pages. The French source omits this phrase and simply notes that the translation was undertaken “que plus a plain pourries cy desoubz veoir par order” (p. 268, ll. 1–2). See *MED*, s.v. ‘discipline’ (n.), 2(a) “Chastisement for moral correction of another; moral teaching or discipline”; and 3(a) “Moral conduct.”

81. On the manuscript tradition, see Seymour, *Sir John Mandeville*, 1–10, 38–56; and Higgins, *Writing East*, 6–27. The complexities of the manuscript transmission history notwithstanding, the Aristotle passage remains a constant across the French, English, and Latin versions.

82. Seymour claims that the so-called “Defective Version” is the oldest of the English translations, dating it sometime “after 1377, perhaps c. 1385”; see *The Defective Version of Mandeville’s Travels*, ed. Seymour, xiii.

83. *Mandeville’s Travels*, ed. Seymour, p. 12, ll. 1–7. This edition reproduces, in modernized form, the text from British Library, Cotton Titus C.16.

84. Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 100.

85. Higgins, *Writing East*, 80; Sobecki, “Mandeville’s Thought of the Limit,” 331.
86. *Mandeville’s Travels*, p. 214, ll. 10–14.
87. Higgins, *Writing East*, 229.
88. *Ibid.*, 80, 227.
89. Michelet, “Reading and Writing the East in *Mandeville’s Travels*,” 284.
90. Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity*.
91. Metlitzki, *Matter of Araby*, 111.
92. Akbari and Iannucci, *Marco Polo and the Encounter of East and West*.

CHAPTER 3. JEAN DE MEUN AND THE RULE OF NECESSITY

Note to epigraphs: All citations to the poem of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun refer to the Lecoy edition of *Roman de la Rose*; English translations are adapted from *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Charles Dahlberg. First epigraph (Dahlberg, p. 240), Lecoy, ll. 13995–14000, 14007–8:

Tourjorz Nature recourra,
ja por habit ne demourra.
Que vaut ce? Toute creature
veust retourner a sa nature,
ja nou lera por violence
de force ne de couvenance.

.....
Trop est fort chose que Nature,
el passe neïs nourreture.

Second epigraph (Dahlberg, pp. 286–87), Lecoy, ll. 17040–48, 17054–56:

Mes je sai bien tretout de voir,
Conbien que li ciel i travaillent,
Qui les meurs naturex leur baillent
Qui les anclinent a ce fere
Qui les fet a ceste fin trere
Par la matire obeisant
Qui leur queur si va flechissant,
Si peuent il bien par doctrine,
Par nourreture nete et fine,

.....
Procurer qu’il soit autrement
Por qu’il aient comme senez
Leur meurs naturex refrenez.

1. On earlier, briefer mentions of the goddess in the vernacular, see Knowlton, “Nature in Old French.” There are several other twelfth-century Latin works that personify nature, including Bernard Silvestris’s *De mundi universitate* and Alan of Lille’s *Anticlaudianus*. These works are discussed in Economou, *Goddess Natura*, 58–72, 97–103. None of these works influenced vernacular poetry as significantly as did Alan’s *De planctu naturae*.

2. Lecoy, ll. 16742, 16751–52; trans. Dahlberg, p. 282.

3. Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 53.

4. On this technical scholastic vocabulary in the *Rose*, see Hilder, *Der scholastische Wortschatz bei Jean de Meun*.

5. Paré, *Les idées et les lettres au XIIIe siècle*, 207: “La confession de Nature est sans contredit la partie la plus importante du *Roman de pointe de vue des idées*.” C. S. Lewis criticized the digression of Nature’s monologue (among others) and took it as a metonymy for the faulty “meandering” of Jean’s continuation; see *Allegory of Love*, 139–42.

6. A generation of critics argued over Jean's relation to Alan's Nature and Genius. In John V. Fleming's Robertsonian reading, Nature is to be taken ironically, as an ineffectual guide for a dissolute and sin-soaked narrator. Genius is imagined as a parody of Alan of Lille's type, and both he and Nature together form a cautionary exemplum against trusting too much to the things of this world; see Fleming, *Roman de La Rose*, 185–249, esp. 194–214. More recently, Lucie Polak ("Plato, Nature and Jean de Meun," 82) concurs, calling Jean's Nature a parody of that found in Alan. In Winthrop Wetherbee's account, these characters are not parody, but rather faithful renderings of Chartrian allegorical prototypes, albeit ones that insist on "following out their literal as well as their allegorical implications." This insistence is what makes them allegorical failures according to Wetherbee, characters who come to "reflect the confusion and duplicity of the world of human experience ... where delusion and selfinterest prevail" (*Platonism and Poetry*, 260, 264). For a further refinement of this thesis, see Wetherbee, "The Literal and the Allegorical." Both Fleming and Wetherbee are responding to the reading of Rosemond Tuve, who sees Nature as "not wrong but incomplete" (*Allegorical Imagery*, 273). It is certainly the case, as Barbara Newman notes, that Alan was skeptical that Nature could be a source of sexual regulation without the aid of theology; see *God and the Goddesses*, 72–73.

7. Gunn, *Mirror of Love*, esp. 126–30.

8. Ronquist, "Patient and Impatient Encyclopaedism," 40; and Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World*, 213. Other critics who have discussed the encyclopedic aspect of Jean's Nature include Fasseur, "Des propriétés des choses"; and Jeay, "Entre encyclopédie et récit."

9. Those who have discerned Averroistic tendencies in Jean include Müller, *Der Rosenroman und der lateinische Averroismus*; and Gunn, *Mirror of Love*, 476–78. Cf. Badel's refutation of Müller in *Le Roman de la Rose au XIV siècle*, 34; and Paré, *Les idées et les lettres*, 242, who argues that Jean adopts Boethius's orthodox solution to the free will problem.

10. Heller-Roazen, *Fortune's Faces*, esp. 111–24.

11. Lecoy, ll. 16771, 16803, 18937, 18951, 18960; trans. Dahlberg, 282, 283, 313–14.

12. Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World*, 189–94. For Mary Franklin-Brown, Nature is "a palimpsest of the encyclopedia" insofar as "Jean has transformed Nature herself into a figure of disorder by breaking down the list" (205).

13. The term "horizon of expectations" refers to the social and historical factors that would have made a work intelligible to its original audience; see Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, 88.

14. Lecoy, ll. 16284–676; trans. Dahlberg, 276–81.

15. Kay finds Nature to be an antifeminist figure, but one capable of destabilizing gender hierarchies; see Kay, *Romance of the Rose*, 96–113, esp. 101–5. For another reading of how a misogynistic Nature is still able to resist gendered stereotypes, see Huot, "Bodily Peril." Noah Guynn, *Allegory and Sexual Ethics*, 141, argues that, while Jean's continuation repeatedly holds up masculine privilege for inspection, the continuation ultimately "seeks to stabilize and naturalize an ideology of male authority and female subordination."

16. Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature*; and Hadot, *Veil of Isis*, esp. 62–63.

17. Lecoy, ll. 18268–70; trans. Dahlberg, 304.

18. Lecoy, ll. 19188–90; trans. Dahlberg, 317.

19. Bloch, "Medieval Misogyny," 7–8.

20. See Huot, *Romance of the Rose" and Its Medieval Readers*.

21. Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 193–94.

22. On the syncretism of thirteenth-century Latin encyclopedias, see Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World*, 52–56; on vernacular encyclopedias and *De pomis*, see [Chapters 2](#) and [3](#) above.

23. In addressing the dark spots on the moon, for instance, Nature offers both a natural philosophical and a mythographic explanation, much as we saw in the twelfth-century vernacular encyclopedia *L'image du monde* discussed in [Chapter 1](#) above. First, Nature says that we can understand the dark and light patterns on the moon's surface by analogy with

the way that lights hit glass. The darker parts are those that do not reflect back the sun's rays, much like light passing through a transparent glass, while the lighter parts reflect back the sun's rays much like a polished glass such as a mirror. This analogy to mirror technology is followed by a more mythographic interpretation: the dark areas on the moon represent not transparency on the moon's surface but "la figure / d'une trop merveilleuse beste" (ll. 16852–53): a serpent on whose back is a tree in whose branches rests a man. Dark spots on the lunar landscape can thus be explained either natural philosophically or mythographically. The moon episode is found in Lecoy, ll. 16825–64; trans. Dahlberg, 283–84.

24. Rainbows were a central example in late medieval discussions of optics; cf. Grosseteste's Aristotelian discussion, reproduced in Grant, *Source Book*, 388–91.

25. On Jean's use of optics more generally, see Eberle, "The Lovers' Glass"; and the chapter on Jean de Meun in Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil*.

26. Lecoy, ll. 18000–18003; trans. Dahlberg, 300.

27. Lecoy, ll. 18167–69; trans. Dahlberg, 302.

28. Lecoy, l. 18222; trans. Dahlberg, 303.

29. See Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil*, 90–96; and Eberle, "The Lovers' Glass."

30. My reading is opposed to that of Polak in this regard; see "Plato, Nature," esp. 96.

31. According to Alan, God fashioned the world "non exterioris instrumenti laborante suffragio, non materiae praeiacentis auxilio, non indigentiae stimulante flagitio, sed solius arbitariae voluntatis imperio" (not with the assistance of any exterior instrument, nor by making use of preexisting matter, not driven by any shameful sense of need, but wholly at the command of his own will and judgment); *De planctu naturae*, 8.28 (pp. 106–7).

32. *De planctu naturae*, 8.8 (pp. 92–95).

33. See Chapter 1 above.

34. Hodgson, "Quantum Physics, Consciousness, and Free Will," 102–3.

35. Necessity is, for Aristotle, that "action for an end is present in things which come to be and are by nature" (*Physics* 2.8; 199a8).

36. For an introduction to the thirteenth-century context of this debate, see Hoffman, "Intellectualism and Voluntarism."

37. In a besieged city where municipal authorities have decreed that the gates should remain shut, for example, it would be permissible to open the gates to a band of the city's soldiers being pursued by the enemy: "si vero sit subitum periculum, non patiens tantam moram ut ad superiorem recurri possit, ipsa necessitas dispensationem habet annexam, quia necessitas non subditur legi" (if, however, the danger is urgent, and admits of no delay, or time for recourse to higher authority, the very necessity carries a dispensation with it, for necessity knows no law); see *ST* 1a2a.96.6. Elsewhere, Aquinas says that stealing when one is in extreme necessity is not a sin or stealing from someone who has a superabundance (*ST* 2a2ae.66.7). The *locus classicus* is Gratian's *Decretum*, C.1 q.1 d.p.c.39. On the phrase's medieval legal development, see Roumy, "L'origine et la diffusion de l'adage canonique *Necessitas non habet legem*."

38. See Manzalaoui, *Secretum*, p. 55, ll. 8–12.

39. *De interpretatione*, 9 (18b26–32). This phrase enjoyed popularity in scholastic discussions of free will, and Nature apparently echoes the Aristotelian dictum when she complains that, if men truly believed that their actions were foreordained and hence choice was illusory, then "genz ne convandroit / de nule chose conseil querre / ne fere besoignes en terre" (people would never seek advice on anything nor undertake any earthly labors) (Lecoy, ll. 17210–12; trans. Dahlberg, 289). Aquinas, following Aristotle, makes a similar point in *ST* 1a.83.1: "Man has free will; otherwise, counsels, exhortations, commands, prohibitions, rewards and punishments would be in vain." On this Aristotelian phrase, see Gelber, *It Could Have Been Otherwise*, 224.

40. Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, collatio 3.3 (p. 91).

41. Siger and Boethius were both later excommunicated for adhering too closely to a

dangerously naturalist model of volition. The foundational study that gathers the documents related to this skeptical crisis is Mandonnet, *Siger de Brabant et l'averroïsme latin au XIII^e siècle*. A more recent reconsideration is found in Imbach, "L'Averroïsme latin du XIII^e siècle."

42. Aside from brief biblical allusions to providence in the book of Wisdom, medieval scholastic discussions of how God's omniscience coexisted with man's free will were most directly indebted to Boethius's *Consolatio philosophiae* and, later, to Aristotle after the translation of his *Physics* and *De interpretatione*.

43. Lecoy, ll. 17175–88; trans. Dahlberg, 288.

44. Heller-Roazen, *Fortune's Faces*, 115–17, argues that this section of the *Rose* intentionally activates the difficult language associated with modal logic and future contingents. The background on the scholastic problem can be found in Craig, *Problem of Divine Foreknowledge*.

45. Jean's Nature claims that conditional and simple necessities are not "convertible." On this scholastic term, see Hilder, *Der scholastische Wortschatz*, 51–52.

46. Boethius, *Consolatio philosophiae*, bk. 5, pr. 6.

47. Paré, *Les idées et les lettres*, 231–52, discusses Nature's views on necessity and providence in relation to Boethius.

48. Gelber, "Providence"; on this question, see also Courtenay, "Dialectic of Omnipotence."

49. Heller-Roazen, *Fortune's Faces*, 111.

50. *Ibid.*, 131.

51. Lecoy, ll. 17228–32; trans. Dahlberg, 289.

52. Lecoy, ll. 18836–55; trans. Dahlberg, 312.

53. *Physics* 2.8 (199a8).

54. Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination*, 122.

55. In answering the question of how the celestial movements influence earthly events, Albertus Magnus proposed a halfway solution in his work *De fato*: "the heavens effect the motions of particulars on Earth through a complex of radiations, but this form is mid-way between necessity and possibility"; quoted in North, "Comets, Necessity, and Nature," 287.

56. Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas*, 221. Thomas Pink, "Freedom of the Will," 575, concurs: for Aquinas, "the will's status as an intellectual or rational faculty was derivative, owing to its acts being informed by those of the intellect." For the view that Aquinas's views do not necessarily make him a compatibilist, see Kretzmann, "Philosophy of Mind," 148; and Stump, "Aquinas's Account of Freedom: Intellect and Will." I follow Pasnau's assessment.

57. Korolec, "Free Will and Free Choice," 637.

58. *Ibid.*, 634.

59. Propositions 21 and 42 respectively; see *CUP*, 1.545. On the atmosphere in Paris leading up to the 1270 articles, see Brady, "Background to the Condemnation of 1270."

60. Putallaz, "Censorship," 102. On the debate over Aquinas and the condemnations, see Wippel, "Thomas Aquinas and the Condemnation of 1277"; and Thijssen, *Censure and Heresy*.

61. Poirion, *Roman de la Rose*, 128ff.

62. Badel's point that, contra Müller, Jean should not be considered an "averroïste" is well taken; see Badel, "Le milieu culturel," in *Roman de la Rose*, 32–38, esp. 34. For Müller's argument, see note 9 above. Paré, *Les idées et les lettres*, 321–25, identifies the few propositions aimed at dealing with unnatural acts and how they may intersect with the *Rose*'s representation of the relative value of chastity and extramarital sex.

63. For a consideration of Aquinas's views on *dispositio* or, alternately, *inclinatio*, see Cunningham, "Natural Inclination in Aquinas."

64. The most complete discussion of Aquinas's views on the will is Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas*, 234–64, from which this summary is drawn; see also Kretzmann, "Philosophy of Mind."

65. Thomas Aquinas, *Compendium of Theology*, 1:129 (p. 102). Latin text is taken from the Vives edition: *Opera omnia*, ed. S. E. Fretté and P. Maré. vol. 27, p. 51.

66. Aquinas addresses this problem most succinctly in *ST* 1a.82; for an analysis of Aquinas's rhetoric of volitional causation, see Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas*, 230–33.

67. Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas*, 221.

68. The 1270 condemnations are found in *CUP*, 1:486–87. Several relate to the will, including prop. 3, “Quod voluntas hominis ex necessitate vult vel eligit”; and prop. 9, “Quod liberum arbitrium est potentia passiva, non activa; et quod necessitate movetur ab appetibili.” The first broadly condemns the idea that man's will is subject to necessity, while the second censures the more specific idea that free will is passive or moved by the rational appetite. For a discussion of the relation of the two condemnations, see Wippel, “Parisian Condemnations of 1270 and 1277,” esp. 70.

69. Lecoy, ll. 17543–48; trans. Dahlberg, 293.

70. On thirteenth-century writers who championed the autonomy of the will, see Teske, “The Will as King over the Powers of the Soul.”

71. *Middle English “Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy,”* p. 9, ll. 125–28.

72. The physiognomical treatise included in most versions of the *Secretum secretorum* usually asserts some version of the idea that “the Sowle sueth [follows] the condycionys of the bodyes”; see Steele, *Three Prose Versions of the Secreta secretorum*, 218. This same treatise is usually prefaced by an anecdote about the physiognomer Philemon who claims to read the disposition of Hippocrates rather than his actual character; this distinction is supposed to hedge the question of determinism. See, for instance, the version of the anecdote in Manzalaoui, *Secretum*, p. 90, ll. 6–32.

73. *CUP*, 1:555, prop. 207.

74. See, for example, the lines (Lecoy, ll. 17057–61; trans. Dahlberg, p. 287) where Nature argues that humans can use reason to return to their own true natures, an assumption that this nature is independent of physical influences or the circumstances of one's birth.

75. My argument stands against those critics who find Jean's Nature to be essentially coextensive with reason, such as Knowlton, “Nature in Old French,” 321. In *Nature et poésie*, Michel Zink argues that Nature is closely linked to Reason, both being daughters of God. Zink reads Jean de Meun as embracing the transcendent view of nature rather than analyzing it, a view that, on Zink's account, characterizes all of the medieval poetry he considers; for his reading of Jean de Meun, see pp. 200–228.

76. See, for instance, *ST* 1a.80, 1a.82, and 1a2ae.9. The account that follows draws on Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas*, 224–30; on this view, Aquinas believed that “the will shapes reason just as much as reason shapes will” (228).

77. Several of the condemned propositions of 1277 argue against the notion that the intellect could in any way determine the workings of the will, including propositions 130, 159 and 188 (*CUP*, 1:543–60).

78. Pink, “Freedom of the Will,” 574.

79. Lecoy, ll. 19008, 19025; trans. Dahlberg, 315. On the mobility of the figure of the *scala naturae*, see [Chapter 1](#).

80. Lecoy ll. 19038–39. The speech on divine will discussed below follows it: Lecoy, ll. 19053–82; trans. Dahlberg, 315–16.

81. On this tendency, see the discussion of Bonaventure's *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* in [Chapter 1](#); Bonaventure speaks sympathetically of Plato as part of his condemnation of Aristotle.

82. Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas*, 229.

83. *ST* 1a.80.2.

84. *ST* 1a.19.8.

85. Lecoy, ll. 17463–68; trans. Dahlberg, 292.

86. The image of the mirror is less an image of the technological progress made possible by university natural philosophy and more an image of the absolute contingency of God's

knowledge. In the words of Daniel Heller-Roazen, the image of the “everlasting mirror,” introduced by Jean into classical and medieval discussions of the will is a succinct and striking emblem of how “divine knowledge is both perfect and yet without any force of constraint on its objects” (*Fortune’s Faces*, 125). Heller-Roazen ultimately sees Jean’s theological vision of nature as emblemized in the mirror as a Thomist one (128–29); this image does not strike me as consistent with Aquinas’s vision of providential causes, and I think Jean’s poem is more interested in showing the instability of the voluntarist critique of Thomism than in proposing a positive, workable model in its place.

87. Cf. *Consolatio*, bk. 4, pr. 6, and *Physics* 2.3 (194b16–195b30). Aquinas’s views on secondary causation can be found in his *ST* 1a.105.5; on the implications of this view, see [Chapter 1](#) above.

88. Gelber, “Providence,” 764. On Aquinas’s view, see Kent, *Virtues of the Will*; and Saarinen, *Weakness of the Will*. The literature on divine foreknowledge in the thirteenth century is vast; the studies that I have found most useful include: Kenny, “Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom”; Wippel, “Divine Knowledge, Divine Power and Human Freedom”; and Craig, *Problem of Divine Foreknowledge*, esp. 99–126. On how Aquinas’s modal theory continued to influence fourteenth-century arguments about providence, see Gelber, *It Could Have Been Otherwise*, 114–50.

89. Courtenay, “Dialectic of Omnipotence,” 252–53.

90. Lecoy, l. 14008; trans. Dahlberg, 240.

91. Lecoy, ll. 17040–56; trans. Dahlberg, 286–87.

92. Lecoy, ll. 14072–73; trans. Dahlberg, 241.

93. An interesting contrast to the respective positions of Jean’s *La Vieille* and *Nature* can be found in the *Roman de Silence*, a thirteenth-century romance whose eponymous cross-dressing heroine is the subject of a fierce contest between the allegories of *Nature* and *Nurture* (“*Norreture*”). *Silence*’s *Nature* jealously guards her prerogatives against the incursions of *Nurture*, arguing that changeable human custom is a poor foundation on which to ground ideals of human behavior. As in Jean’s poem, *Silence*’s allegories can both be interpreted as antifeminist stereotypes. In *Silence*, however, the ideological positions are swapped: *Nature* argues for her superiority on the basis of biological predisposition against her antagonist *Nurture*, who is given the arguments about education and training that Jean’s *Nature* advocates here. An instructive difference between the two is how Jean’s *Nature* is conspicuously scholastic in her arguments as opposed to the cosmological framing of *Silence*’s *Nature*.

94. Huot, “*Romance of the Rose*” and *Its Medieval Readers*, 220. For the textual tradition behind *Genius*, see Nitzsche, *Genius Figure in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*. More recently Jonathan Morton (“Ingenious *Genius*”) points out that Jean’s *Genius* inherits the perverse willfulness and earthy sexuality inherent in the longer cosmographical genealogy of *Genius*.

95. Lecoy, ll. 16256–60; trans. Dahlberg, 275.

96. On Bartholomeus’s epithet, see [Chapter 1](#).

97. In *Physics* 4.1, Aristotle asserts that elemental motions “non solum ostendunt quod aliquid est locus, sed quia et habet quondam potentiam locus” (show not only that place is something, but also that it has a certain potential influence, 208b10–11). He then goes on to quote Hesiod’s views on place approvingly: “Si autem huiusmodi est, mirabilis quedam utique erit potentia loci et prima omnium et prior omnibus; sine quo namque aliorum nullum est ... necesse est esse primum” (If then this is its nature, the potency of place must be a marvelous thing, and take precedence over all other things; for that without which nothing else can exist ... must needs be first, 208b34–36). The Latin text is from the “old translation” of the *Physics*, *Aristoteles Latinus* 7/1.2, pp. 136–38. On ancient theories of place, see Jones, “The Nature of Place and the Place of Nature.”

98. On the distinctive power exerted by place, see Grant, “Place and Space in Medieval Physical Thought.”

99. Economou, *Goddess Natura*, 115–18. Critics frequently read the relation of *Genius* to

Nature as complementary deficits, observing that Genius's claims to priestly authority are undermined, because Nature herself has failed to offer a model for moral exemplarity as she does in Alan of Lille; e.g., Baker, "Priesthood of Genius," 285.

100. Badel, *Roman de la Rose*, 36: "[Genius] pousse jusqu'à leurs conséquences extrêmes et scandaleuses des thèses nuancées des commentateurs d'Aristote."

101. Kay, *Place of Thought*, 180.

102. *Ibid.*, 182.

103. Fleming, *Roman de la Rose*, 209. Genius cannot be considered a positive figure as many other critics have noted. Timothy Stinson, "Illumination and Interpretation," for example, has argued that Genius's iconography in some manuscripts resembles that of Faux Semblant. Sylvia Huot, "*Romance of the Rose*" and *Its Medieval Readers*, 50, has discussed how Genius's advice to men to flee women "leads only to celibacy or homosexuality, both antithetical to his promotion of procreation."

104. Lecoy, l. 19532; trans. Dahlberg, 322.

105. Genius's charter is found in *De planctu naturae*, 18.18 (pp. 214–15).

106. Lecoy, ll. 19483–86; trans. Dahlberg, 322. Note that "annperiau" has connotations of the Empyrean, the outermost of the celestial spheres; cf. *DMF*, s.v. 'empyréal' (adj.).

107. Lecoy, ll. 19487–93; trans. Dahlberg, 322.

108. Christine McWebb has argued that Jean's poem should be seen in light of the debate over Thomist and Averroist interpretations of the condemnation, suggesting that his provocative allusions to this material could be seen as a plea for intellectual freedom. McWebb's observation points to the necessity of reading Jean in a synchronic philosophical rather than just diachronic literary context. My own sense is that his representation of Nature and Genius is less a plea for intellectual freedom and more a desire to make explicit the philosophical confusion that results from cutting out the compatibilist position; see McWebb, "Heresy and Debate."

109. Lecoy, ll. 17705–6; trans. Dahlberg, 296.

110. Lecoy, ll. 18603–8; trans. Dahlberg, 308–9.

111. See Breen, *Imagining an English Reading Public*; especially useful is Breen's extended account of the scholastic genealogy of *habitus* (62–79).

112. *Physics* 2.1 (192b9–23).

113. Lecoy, ll. 16135–52 and 16180–82; trans. Dahlberg, 273–74.

114. In *Reading the World*, Mary Franklin-Brown points to this rhyme as an example of "a further negation of the possibility of writing the world" (211) and of "the disjunction between verbal representation and nature itself" (213). Kevin Brownlee ("Pygmalion, Mimesis," 202–3) notes that Nature explicitly sees the shortcomings of cosmographical models of natural philosophy.

115. See Dragonetti, "Pygmalion ou les pièges de la fiction."

116. Jauss, "La transformation de la forme allégorique," 146.

117. Minnis has argued, following Wetherbee, that Jean leaves behind the strict integumental allegory of twelfth-century cosmologists in order to pursue a more literal understanding of the relation between poet and his matter, one that would be legible to a broader audience of educated but not necessarily academic readers (*Magister Amoris*, 84–87, 108–13).

118. On this movement, see Brownlee, "Allegory in the *Roman de la Rose*," 126. Many critics have discussed Jean's allegorical practice; for an overview, see Strubel, "La personnification allégorique, avatar du mythe."

119. Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World*, 213.

120. On Aquinas's views on allegory, see [Chapter 1](#).

121. *ST* 1a.1.9 entitled "Utrum sacra scriptura debeat uti meaphoris vel symbolicis locutionibus" (Should holy teaching employ metaphorical or symbolical language?). Other relevant discussions of metaphor include *ST* 1a.13.9 and 1a.33.3.

122. *De planctu naturae*, 2.24 (pp. 44–45).

123. In *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies*, David Hult argues that, in Guillaume de Lorris's section of the *Rose*, there is interpretive collusion between the reader and the narrator that produces the moral meaning of the text (97). My point here is that Jean de Meun makes such collusion impossible; for Jean, there is estrangement between reader and narrator.

124. Nature's pen is mentioned in *De planctu naturae*, 4.1 (pp. 56–57), and she later writes her charter with it at 16.24 (pp. 194–95).

125. Genius's inscriptive practices are described in *De planctu naturae*, 18.7 (pp. 206–7). For a discussion of Genius as an alter ego for the poet, see Kevin Brownlee, "Jean de Meun and the Limits of Romance."

126. In this way, Nature's representation embodies not theological skepticism but rather a skeptical methodology, such as that outlined by Perler, "Skepticism," where he distinguishes between skepticism per se and a method that presents arguments in order "to refute a certain conception of knowledge and attempt to introduce a new one—a conception that is supposed to give a better explanation of what knowledge is and how it can be acquired" (385).

127. Lecoy, ll. 21316–404; trans. Dahlberg, 348–49.

128. Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 194.

129. This explicit is found in Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, MS 1126. The manuscript is described in Langlois, *Les manuscrits du "Roman de la Rose"*, 85; and discussed in Badel, *Roman de la Rose*, 115–17.

130. Many scholars have documented the poem's reception in the first century after its appearance; see Badel, *Roman de la Rose*; Huot, "*Romance of the Rose*" and *Its Medieval Readers*; and Fleming, "Moral Reputation of the *Roman de la Rose*." The relevant documents on the *querelle de la Rose* appear in several collections, including Hicks, *Le débat sur le Roman de la Rose*; McWebb and Richards, *Debating the "Roman de la Rose"*; and Hult, *Debate of the Romance of the Rose*.

CHAPTER 4. ALLEGORY WITHOUT NATURE

1. This passage is found in Guillaume de Deguileville, *Le pèlerinage de vie humaine*, ed. J. J. Stürzinger (P VH), ll. 1519–2004. An English translation is found in *The Pilgrimage of Human Life*, trans. Eugene Clasby, pp. 22–28. Subsequent citations of the first recension of Deguileville's poem refer to these editions respectively. Clasby's translation is occasionally amended without comment.

2. The *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* was translated, in part or in whole, into multiple European languages including English, German, Dutch, Castilian, and Latin; on this history, see Nievergelt and Kamath, *Pèlerinage Allegories of Guillaume de Deguileville*, 3–5; and Nievergelt, *Allegorical Quests*, 32–40. On the popularity of Deguileville's trilogy as a whole, see the essays collected in Duval and Pomel, *Guillaume de Digulleville*. Their volume concludes with an appendix listing manuscripts containing Deguileville's trilogy (425–53), while Clasby's introduction includes early print editions (*Pilgrimage*, xxxv–xliv). The popularity of the *Pèlerinage* in England is attested in several ways. Chaucer knew and used Deguileville's religious allegories, especially the *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* whose lyric on the Virgin he adapted; see Phillips, "Chaucer and Deguileville"; and Dor, "L'ABC de Chaucer." For Chaucer's knowledge of Deguileville more generally, see Tuve, "Guillaume's Pilgrim"; and Phillips, "Chaucer's French Translations." On the poet's wider appeal in England, see Houghton, "Works of Guillaume de Deguileville." The first recension of the *Pèlerinage* was translated into prose in the first quarter of the fifteenth century; on this history, see the introduction to Henry's edition of Deguileville, *The Pilgrimage of the Lyfe of the Manhode*. The second recension appears in an English verse translation attributed to John Lydgate and dated (internally) to 1426, printed in Lydgate, *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, ed. Furnivall and Locock.

3. Wright, "Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de Vie Humaine* as 'Contrepartie Édifiante,'" 404.

4. Huot, *Romance of the Rose* and *Its Medieval Readers*, 207–38.

5. Praise for the *Rose* in *Viez* is found in *PVH*, ll. 7–14, while the addition to *Viez* is reproduced from Paris, BNF fr. 12466 in Badel, *Roman de la Rose au XIVe siècle*, 368–69. For the idea that Deguileville's changing attitude toward the *Rose* reflects the poet's moral development, see Fleming, "Moral Reputation of the *Roman de la Rose*," 433. Several critics have addressed the differences between the two versions. Badel, *Roman de la Rose au XIVe siècle*, 375, observes that the differences between the two versions suggest that Deguileville wanted to clarify both his opinion of the *Rose* and certain theological ambiguities in the earlier version. Huot, *Romance of the Rose* and *Its Medieval Readers*, 226, argues that "whereas the first recension was aimed at a general public expected to receive the text orally, the second recension was aimed at an educated audience who would in all likelihood read the text themselves." Huot also rightly emphasizes the expanded role of Grace in the second version. Philippe Maupéu, *Pèlerins de vie humaine*, uses the differences between the two versions to interrogate medieval ideas about autobiography, claiming that the more particularizing autobiographical elements of *Viez* disrupt the moral allegory of the poem in general and may be an attempt to deflect concerns about necromancy.

6. The Latin text is that of Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum sive originum*, 11.1, accessed February 3, 2015, at <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Isidore/home.html>. The English translation is from *The "Etymologies" of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Barney et al., 11.1 (p. 231).

7. *PVH*, ll. 1505–10; trans. Clasby, 22.

8. Katharine Park, "Nature in Person," 55–56. The most complete discussion of the visual representation of Nature is found in Modersohn, *Natura als Göttin im Mittelalter*. Modersohn notes the iconographic resemblance between Alan of Lille's *Natura* and Boethius's *Philosophia* (30). In her discussion of the images of Nature found in manuscripts of Deguileville's *Pèlerinage*, she points out the degradation of Nature from the images found in *Rose* manuscripts (161–66). Barbara Newman also discusses images of Nature in manuscripts of the *Rose*, observing that the goddess is often depicting "forging" babies or animals (*God and the Goddesses*, 101–5).

9. *Roman de la Rose*, ed. Lecoy, ll. 16737–54.

10. The disagreement between Nature and Grace Dieu occurs at *PVH*, ll. 1559–1998; trans. Clasby, 22–28.

11. *PVH*, l. 2099.

12. *PJC*, ll. 1985–2148. This passage fascinatingly addresses the Virgin Birth in terms of the physics of light.

13. Quoted in Van Steenberghen, *Aristotle in the West*, 78.

14. *PVH*, l. 1565; trans. Clasby, 22.

15. This is found in the verse translation of *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* attributed to John Lydgate; see London, British Library MS Cotton Vitellius C.xiii, fol. 53r. On the use of the scholastic phrase, see Lucks, "Natura Naturans–Natura Naturata."

16. *PVH*, ll. 1691–98; trans. Clasby, 24.

17. Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 45.

18. Huot, *Romance of the Rose* and *Its Medieval Readers*, 223.

19. *PVH*, l. 1796; trans. Clasby, 25.

20. *PVH*, ll. 1880–81; trans. Clasby, 26.

21. Isaiah 10:15: "Shall the axe boast itself against him that cutteth with it? Or shall the saw exalt itself against him by whom it is drawn?"

22. *PVH*, ll. 1947–58; trans. Clasby, 27.

23. *PVH*, ll. 5093–640; trans. Clasby, 69–76. The argument between Raison and Rude Entendement reenacts a similar hermeneutic conflict between literal and figurative reading that we see in the earlier one between Grace Dieu and Nature.

24. For a consideration of Aquinas's views on secondary causation, see [Chapter 1](#).

25. Like Deguileville's Raison, Tempier's condemnation rejected the idea that secondary

causes act in a mediate way on lower creatures or that such causes might in any way be separable from the first cause; see, for instance, props. 195, 198, and 199 in *CUP*, 1:554.

26. The following paragraph draws on the discussion of *potentia absoluta* found in Courtenay, *Covenant and Causality in Medieval Thought*, chap. 4, “Dialectic of Divine Omnipotence”; and Gelber, *It Could Have Been Otherwise*.

27. Lindberg, *Science in the Middle Ages*, 218.

28. On this point, see Courtenay, *Capacity and Volition*, 122; and Leff, *William of Ockham*, 17.

29. Courtenay, *Capacity and Volition*, 191.

30. For a concise summary of Ockham’s beliefs and their modern reception, see Adams, “Ockham on Will, Nature, and Morality.”

31. See *CUP*, 2:280–81. On the debate leading up to the canonization within the Dominican order as well as later attempts to mold his legacy, see Lowe, *The Contested Theological Authority of Thomas Aquinas*, esp. chap. 5. The Condemnation of 1277 is discussed at length in [Chapter 2](#) above.

32. *ST* 1a.2.2.

33. On what is known of Deguileville’s life as reconstructed from references within his texts, see Faral, “Guillaume de Digulleville, moine de Châalis.”

34. Cut from the *Viez* is the 142-line passage wherein Nature and Grace Dieu argue over the proper meaning of the ax metaphor; this corresponds to *PVH*, ll. 1838–1980. For comparison, the corresponding passage in *Viez* can be found at Paris, BNF, MS fr. 377, fol. 20v. While there is no modern print edition, one could also compare the passage found in the early sixteenth-century edition of Deguileville, *Le romant des trois pelerinaiges*, fols. 11v–13r.

35. For a useful list of the major differences between the two versions, see Furnivall’s introduction to his edition of Lydgate’s *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, xvii–xxxi.

36. The addition appears in Lydgate’s *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* at ll. 20131–624; see especially Astrology’s assertion that philosophers call planetary influence on human bodies “seconde causys” (l. 20142). For a discussion of astrodeterminism in relation to the *Roman de la Rose*, see [Chapter 3](#) above. In Jean de Meun’s continuation of the *Rose*, combating astrodeterminism had been Nature’s job; in Deguileville, this job has been reassigned to the pilgrim.

37. Courtenay, *Ockham and Ockhamism*, 144. Courtenay further elaborates that the prohibition was aimed not at the arts faculty per se but at their students, suggesting an attempt to shut down broader discussion of Ockham’s controversial views on ontology and hermeneutics.

38. While Courtenay cautions that Clement VI’s letter may have had the narrower aim of proscribing some of Ockham’s views on physics and logic (*Ockham and Ockhamism*, 400), Luca Bianchi (*Censure et liberté intellectuelle*) suggests that, read in the broader context of anti-Ockhamist initiatives in Paris around this time, this letter marks the culmination of the thirteenth-century project of assimilating Aristotle to Christian thought.

39. E.g., Graham, “Allegory in Mediaeval French Literature,” 296–97, claims that “the argument between Aristotle and Sapience ... has nothing to do with the pilgrim’s journey”; cited in Henry’s introduction to Deguileville, *Pilgrimage of the Lyfe*, xxix. The play, mentioned by Henry in his introduction (xxviii), illustrates only the conflict between Nature, Grace Dieu, Sapience, and Aristotle; it is reproduced in Cohen, *Mystères et moralités du manuscrit 617 de Chantilly*, 263–302.

40. See Rosenfeld, *Ethics and Enjoyment*, 122–25; and Kamath, “Rewriting Ancient Auctores in the *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine*.”

41. Kay, *Place of Thought*, 75–81.

42. While Deguileville evidently knew the story of Aristotle’s deathbed discussion in *De pomo* (he mentions it in his *Pèlerinage de l’âme*), he chooses instead to present Aristotle as a figure for the opposing claims of science and revelation. Deguileville rejects the

prophetically “Christianized” Aristotle for one that emphasizes the incompatibility of Aristotle’s beliefs with theological doctrine.

43. PVH, I. 2918.

44. On the tradition of this phrase, see Monfasani, “Aristotle as the Scribe of Nature.” I am grateful to John Monfasani for this reference.

45. See Grant, “Medieval Natural Philosophy.”

46. PVH, I. 2944.

47. PVH, II. 2971–82; trans. Clasby, 41.

48. Clasby cites *Metaphysics* 7.10–11 (1034b20–1037b7) as the relevant discussion of parts and wholes (p. 198 n. 86); however, also relevant is the discussion in *Politics* 1.2 (1253a2–39) that, in its discussion of individuals as parts of the polis, cites the dictum that “nature makes nothing in vain.”

49. Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, esp. 64–65.

50. Sylla, “Autonomous and Handmaiden Science,” esp. 361–72.

51. Aquinas’s discussion of sacraments in general is found in *ST* 3a.60–65; of the Eucharist in particular, *ST* 3a.73–83.

52. On Aquinas’s views of sacramental causality and those of his critics, see Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist*, 51–66.

53. Propositions 138–41 attempt to enforce the hylomorphic understanding that relied on God’s ability to destroy the physical bread without destroying its accidents; see *CUP*, 1:551.

54. On how Scotus and Ockham change the terms of the debate, see Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories*, 197–226; and Catto, “Wyclif and the Cult of the Eucharist,” 272.

55. Sylla, “Autonomous and Handmaiden Science,” 373.

56. PVH, II. 3147–54; trans. Clasby, 42.

57. *Physics*, 4.6–9 (213a11–217b28).

58. See Grant, *Much Ado About Nothing*.

59. Aristotle’s beliefs on the impossibility of the void were undermined by the 1277 condemnation, since articles 34 and 49 suggested that God could create a vacuum should he so desire; see Grant, *Much Ado*, 108–10.

60. See Sylla, “*Ideo quasi mendicare oportet intellectum humanum*,” 243.

61. PVH, II. 2961–64; trans. Clasby, 40.

62. See Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories*, 87. This is Adams’s proposition T7.

63. PVH, I. 2968.

64. The following discussion is indebted to several works on late medieval eucharistic theology in addition to those cited in note 51 above, including Macy, *Theologies of the Eucharist*; Burr, *Eucharistic Presence and Conversion*; Bakker, “La raison et le miracle” (esp. 1:21–41); and Lahey, “Late Medieval Eucharistic Theology.”

65. Lindberg, *Science in the Middle Ages*, 220.

66. *ST* 3a.76.1.

67. *Ibid.*

68. Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories*, 95.

69. *ST* 3a.76.1.

70. See Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, 2.8.11 (p. 313).

71. See Burr, *Eucharistic Presence*, 100. Burr refers to the thesis of substance conversion throughout as the “Thomist-Bonaventurean” thesis, yet this designation is slightly misleading, since, while Bonaventure did argue for transubstantiation, much of what was objected to by the writers Burr cites were actually the arguments of Aquinas not Bonaventure. I follow Marilyn McCord Adams in designating this set of views as “Thomistic”; see Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories*, 89 n. 5.

72. PVH, II. 3201–18; trans. Clasby, 43.

73. Burr (*Eucharistic Presence*, 22) identifies it in the writings of the thirteenth-century Dominican Richard Fishacre, while J. I. Catto (“Wyclif and the Cult,” 273) discusses John

Wyclif's use of the image later in the fourteenth century.

74. *ST* 3a.76.3.

75. In his discussion of the sacraments, Aquinas emphasizes that, even though we see bread but know Christ to be present, our senses are not deceived. He says that there are simply some things that are beyond the senses; *ST* 3a.75.5.2: "faith is not contrary to the senses, but concerns things to which sense does not reach."

76. Ambrose, *Select Works*, "On the Mysteries," 9.50. The Latin text is taken from *De mysteriis*, PL 16:405.

77. *Ibid.*, 9.53; PL 16:407.

78. *PVH*, ll. 3259–66; trans. Clasby, 44.

79. *PVH*, l. 1757.

80. Grace Dieu's threat to intervene directly in the sublunary natural order raises the specter of occasionalism, the idea that all natural processes result from direct divine intervention in the world. This is the extreme end of the fully contingent position and posed its own theological risks (such as limiting free will), risks that Guillaume seems prepared to take.

81. In his meditation on how causes do not transfer all of their qualities, in the same form, to their effects, Aquinas observes that the sun heats sublunary bodies but that these earthly bodies cannot properly be called hot in the same manner as the sun. He continues that just as the sun acts as an efficient cause in this way, so too does God: "And so the sun is said to be somewhat like those things in which it produces its effects as an efficient cause [*efficaciter inducit*]. Yet the sun is also unlike all these things in so far as such effects do not possess heat and the like in the same way as they are found in the sun. So, too, God gave things all their perfections and thereby is both like and unlike all of them [*Ita etiam et Deus omnes perfectiones rebus tribuit, ac per hoc cum omnibus similitudinem habet et dissimilitudinem simul*]; see Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, trans. Pegis, 1.29.2; the Latin text is found in *Liber de veritate catholicae fidei contra errores infidelium seu Summa contra gentiles*, ed. Pera, 2.42.

82. *Errores philosophorum*, ed. Koch and Riedl, 13. This treatise was formerly attributed to Giles of Rome but that attribution is most likely spurious.

83. Freddoso, "Ockham on Faith and Reason," 343.

84. See Sylla, "Creation and Nature," 189.

85. Lewis, *Allegory of Love*, 338.

86. Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery*, 162. Hagen makes a similar argument in *Allegorical Remembrance*, 38–41.

87. Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery*, 160.

88. Zeeman, "Medieval Religious Allegory," 154.

89. Stephanie Kamath understands Deguileville's allegorical practice to be dependent on "the fragmentation of the speaking subject in creating moments of authorial identification" (*Authorship and First-Person Allegory*, 34). This allegoresis, according to Kamath, encourages us to read antiphrastically, to assign the opposite understanding to a term or to acknowledge that a name and the thing it signifies are not necessarily the same: the first-person narrator, the self-identified son of Thomas de Deguileville, is more aptly understood as the universal Christian pilgrim (*ibid.*, 40–41). In *Pèlerins de vie humaine*, Maupeu argues that the success of Deguileville's allegory depends on the reader's ability to identify with the poem's pilgrim-narrator, a potential for imaginative substitution that, he believes, diminishes between the first and second recensions.

90. Kay, *Place of Thought*, 93. Several recent critics have explored Deguileville's allegorical practice in relation to social institutions and literary genealogies. Emily Steiner has intriguingly traced the ways in which fictive charters allow Deguileville to affirm personification allegory in his allegorical trilogy. According to Steiner, Deguileville consciously uses the material form of the legal documents to act as a mediator between the human and spiritual realms; see *Documentary Culture*, chap. 1, "Bracton, Deguileville, and

the Defense of Allegory.” Marco Nievergelt explicates the poem’s form in relation to other pilgrimage narratives, arguing that it is a psychomachia in the vein of Prudentius; see *Allegorical Quests*, 23–44. Fabienne Pomel analyzes Deguileville’s trilogy in the wider context of voyages to other worlds. If allegory was supposed to be the substance that knits together the physical and metaphysical, Pomel sees the trilogy as a failure, a literary enterprise that exceeds the bounds of the poet’s reach; see *Les voies de l’au-delà et l’essor de l’allégorie*, 513–36. My own view is that Deguileville is successful in his own terms, ones that wish to leave the physical referent of allegory behind.

91. Zeeman, “Medieval Religious Allegory,” 161.

92. On Alan of Lille’s allegorical practice, see [Chapter 3](#).

93. Huot, “*Romance of the Rose*” and *Its Medieval Readers*, 224.

94. *De planctu naturae*, 8.29 (p. 108). God is also described in various artisan metaphors such as “architectus,” “aurarius,” and “opifex” (8.28; p. 106). On these metaphors, see [Chapter 1](#).

95. *ST* 1a.45.6.

96. *PVH*, ll. 13334–49; trans. Clasby, 183.

97. *Generation of Animals*, 4.8 (777a4–22).

98. *PVH*, ll. 13363–66; trans. Clasby, 183.

99. See Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*.

100. See [Chapter 2](#).

101. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 28–29, outlines the development of the Aristotelian prologue in response to the Latin translation of the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics*.

102. Jon Whitman acknowledges that the Aristotelian prologue encouraged “a certain discrimination of subtle forces potentially at play in a composition,” even as he remains skeptical that this development represents a wholesale adoption of physical principles into rhetorical situations (“Present Perspectives,” 55).

103. *PVH*, ll. 13369–70; trans. Clasby, 183–84.

104. *PVH*, ll. 101–2; trans. Clasby, 4.

105. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 1.4.4; trans. Robertson, 10.

106. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 2.16.24; trans. Robertson, 50–51.

107. Alan of Lille, “Omnis mundi creatura,” 544.

108. Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, 12.15; discussed in [Chapter 1](#).

109. *PVH*, l. 2230; trans. Clasby, 31.

110. *PVH*, ll. 2775–812; trans. Clasby, 38. Of the fallen senses only hearing is deemed reliable in the celebration of the Eucharist. As Nicolette Zeeman perceptively notes, this is a redirection of the visual allegory of *Roman de la Rose* where it is the sight of the rosebush that leads the dreamer on his journey (“Medieval Religious Allegory,” 148). I would add that it is also a correction of natural philosophy that depends on sight as its primary instrument of observation.

111. *PVH*, ll. 5813–20; trans. Clasby, 79.

112. *PVH*, ll. 5926–28; trans. Clasby, 80.

113. *PVH*, l. 6271: “Or le retrousse et le repren.”

114. *ST* 1a.76.1.

115. For a clear account of the issues surrounding thirteenth-century Augustinian theories of the soul, see Toivanen, *Perception and the Internal Senses*.

116. Kay, *Place of Thought*, 85–90.

117. *De planctu naturae*, 6.11 (p. 76); cf. *Roman de la Rose*, ed. Lecoy, l. 19023; trans. Dahlberg, 315.

118. *PVH*, ll. 5957–62; trans. Clasby, 81:

Se tu te veus regarder bien,
Mes que forfait tu n’aies rien,
A ta noblece comparer
Ne se puet ciel, terre ne mer,

Oisel ne' autre creature
Excepte d'angres la nature

(If you consider yourself well, except for your transgressions, nothing, not the heavens, the earth, the sea, the birds or any other creature, except the angels, can compare to your nobility.)

119. Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery*, 179.

120. The allegory is double-voiced in the way that Boethian dialogues usually are: the poet speaks simultaneously as *magister* and *puer*. Kay describes this voicing as a dramatization of the pilgrim's inner split between his subjective *je* and his embodied, objective *il*, "between the capacity for thought and the capacity for being" (*Place of Thought*, 93).

121. On Aquinas's views on allegory, see [Chapter 1](#).

122. The relevant lines in the 1331 recension are *PVH*, ll. 9–14; trans. Clasby, 3. In the second recension, these opening lines are omitted; the later reference to the *Rose* is printed by Badel, *Roman de la Rose*, 368–70. On the meaning of these differences, see Huot, "Romance of the Rose" and *Its Medieval Readers*, 207–8, 225–38.

123. The relevant documents of the *querelle* are reproduced in Hicks, *Débat sur le Roman de la Rose*. Editions that provide English translations include: Baird and Kane, *La Querelle de la Rose*; Hult, *Debate of the Romance of the Rose*; and McWebb and Richards, *Debating the "Roman de la Rose."* The introductions to all of these volumes provide context for the contributions of Christine and Gerson to this debate. For a discussion of the chronology of this debate and for Gerson's political and literary engagements, see Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "Jean Gerson and the Debate on the *Romance of the Rose*."

124. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "Jean Gerson and the Debate," 317; on Gerson's vision in particular, see 332–41. For Gerson's self-conscious attempts to style himself a moralist in both his French and Latin writings, see Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity Before Print*.

125. Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 230–31, notes that Gerson purposefully conflates Jean the author with his character Genius in order to excoriate both.

126. Jean Gerson, "Le traité contre le Roman de la Rose," in McWebb and Richards, *Debating the "Roman de la Rose,"* 292 (ll. 419–20). Further citation refers by line number to this edition and translation.

127. *Ibid.*, l. 422.

128. *Ibid.*, ll. 476–47.

129. *Ibid.*, ll. 488–94.

130. *Ibid.*, ll. 581–88.

CHAPTER 5. CHAUCER'S NATURES

1. Boece, bk. 3, pr. 11 (*Riverside Chaucer*, p. 436, ll. 153–55).

2. Zeeman, "Philosophy in Parts."

3. Stanbury, "Ecochaucer," 5.

4. Langland, *Piers Plowman*, C.14.161–63.

5. Among the many works attributed to the poet-narrator of Chaucer's Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* is a version of the *Rose*, a poem to which the God of Love objects, since it is "an heresye ayeins my lawe / And makest wise folk fro me withdrawe" (ll. 330–31). While all critics agree that Chaucer translated parts of the *Roman de la Rose*, they have disagreed as to precisely which parts; for a summary of the debate up until the late 1990s, see Dahlberg's edition of the *Romaunt*, 3–24. More recently, Simon Horobin has argued that the remaining fragments could all be by Chaucer; see *The Language of the Chaucer Tradition* and his article "A New Fragment of the *Romaunt of the Rose*." Critics have documented Chaucer's translation of parts of Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* as well as his knowledge of other works by the allegorist; see, for instance, Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery*;

Phillips, "Chaucer's French Translations" and "Chaucer and Deguileville"; Kamath, *Authorship and First-Person Allegory*, chap. 2; and Nievergelt, *Allegorical Quests*, esp. 38–39. Chaucer's dependence on the *Roman* is a usual topos in the criticism of the poem; see, for instance, Bennett, *The Parlement of Foules*.

6. Economou, *Goddess Natura*, 143, 149.

7. Aers, "The Parliament of Fowls," 10.

8. Kiser, "Alain de Lille, Jean de Meun, and Chaucer." Elsewhere Kiser has argued that the *Parliament's* "subversive intertextuality"—its engagement with Macrobius and Alan—"represents the anxieties of the narrator as he tries to write a poem," a poem that is critical of "authoritative discourses in general" (*Truth and Textuality*, 43). For another reading that focuses on the narrator's relation to his sources, see Tinkle, "The Case of the Variable Source."

9. Cadden, "Trouble in the Earthly Paradise," 229.

10. Seneca, *On the Shortness of Life*, 1.1. Seneca attributes the sentiment to Aristotle, explaining that the Greek philosopher laments the fact that humans are given shorter lifespans as compared with other animals. For Seneca, this is the topos from which he can address the question: Why do we complain of nature? Seneca chides Aristotle for his putative complaint, arguing instead that humans should accept these natural limitations and use their allotted time wisely, preferably in the study of moral philosophy. Chaucer critics have sometimes approached this proverbial expression anachronistically; see, for instance, Polzella, "The Craft So Long to Lerne."

11. Trevisa, *The Governance of Kings and Princes*, 222/3–9.

12. *MED*, s.v. 'craft' (n.), sense 5; and *MED*, s.v. 'lif' (n.), sense 1. There was a lively medieval debate over the question of whether morality was innate or learned (a *habitus* in the Aristotelian sense); see Nederman, "Nature, Ethics, and the Doctrine of 'Habitus'"; and Breen, *Imagining an English Reading Public*.

13. The *Somnium Scipionis* is an excerpt from Cicero's longer *De re publica* that often circulated independently in the medieval period, usually with Macrobius's commentary. On the textual history of the *Somnium*, see the introduction to Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. Stahl.

14. *Ibid.*, 10.

15. Huot, "Romance of the Rose" and Its Medieval Readers, 49. On Macrobius understood as natural philosophy, see Grant, *History of Natural Philosophy*, 98–100.

16. This image of choosing between two goods can be traced to Aristotle's *De caelo*, 2.13 (295b), where a hungry and thirsty man at an equal distance from food and drink remains where he is and ultimately starves to death. Kathryn L. Lynch has also pointed out this similarity; see "Parliament of Fowls and Late Medieval Voluntarism: Part I," 7–11.

17. David Lawton, *Chaucer's Narrators*, for instance, discusses Chaucer's narrator in the context of the European tradition of love poetry. Other substantive discussions of Chaucer's narrator also focus on the intertextual aspects of his presentation rather than the implications of this particular metaphor; for instance, Lumiansky, "Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*"; and Frank, "Structure and Meaning in the *Parlement of Foules*."

18. Cohen, "Inventing with Animals."

19. *Letter of Petrus Peregrinus on the Magnet*, 6. On the medieval manuscript tradition, see Thompson, *Petrus Peregrinus de Maricourt*.

20. Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things*, 1:474, ll. 25–28.

21. *De mineralibus*, 2.1.1: "Nulla res destituitur a propria et substantiali operatione." The Latin text of *De mineralibus* is taken from *Alberti Magni opera omnia*, ed. Borgnet and Borgnet, 5:25. An English translation can be found in Wyckoff, *Book of Minerals*, 58.

22. Boece, bk. 3, pr. 11 (*Riverside Chaucer*, p. 436, l. 155).

23. *ST* 1a.59.1.

24. For a fuller discussion of Aquinas's views on the will and natural inclination, see Chapter 3 above.

25. *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, ll. 615–26.

26. *De mineralibus*, eds. Borgnet and Borgnet, 2.2.11: “Aiunt etiam hunc lapidem capiti mulieris dormientis suppositum, statim eam movere ad amplexum mariti sui si casta est. Si autem est adultera, prae nimio timore phantasmatum dicitur cadere de lecto” (5:40–41); trans. Wyckoff, *Book of Minerals*, 104. “Adamant” is sometimes an ambiguous term in medieval lapidaries, as it occasionally refers to a diamond, though here it clearly refers to a magnetized piece of iron. On the medieval understanding of magnetism, see Crombie, *Medieval and Early Modern Science*, 1:120–22. The induction of self-motion in a piece of magnetized iron was difficult to explain in terms of Aristotelian physics because it appeared to be a violent rather than natural motion depending on the position of the magnet. Jean Buridan explained it through a version of multiplication of species, wherein the magnet modified the air between magnet and iron. For early modern discussions of magnetism in relation to the medieval, see Fletcher, “Living Magnets, Paracelsian Corpses”; and Spiller, *Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature*, 44–58.

27. On the ways that medieval rocks can potentially signify, see Robertson, “Exemplary Rocks”; and Cohen, *Stone*.

28. Note that the Middle English term “astoned,” often used to describe a response to a difficult situation, comes from the Medieval French *estonné* and only becomes associated with the idea of “petrification” through transference with the native Old English “stān” (stone); see *MED*, s.v. ‘astoned’ (ppl.); and *OED*, s.v. ‘astoned’ (adj.). Chaucer uses it relatively frequently; other examples would include Pandarus at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde* standing “astoned of thise causes tweye, / as stille as a ston; a word ne kowde he seye” (5.1728–29) and the narrator of the *House of Fame* encountering both his talking eagle guide and the counterfactual architecture of Fame’s palace for the first time (ll. 549, 1174).

29. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratorio*, 9.2.29, suggests the ways in which things can become “fictitious persons.”

30. Bokenham, *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, l. 460.

31. *Roman de la Rose*, ed. Lecoy, ll. 19311–12; trans. Dahlberg, 319.

32. Lydgate, *Reson and Sensuallyte*, ll. 6059–65. A marginal note in the description of the adamant cites the authority of “Philosophus 2 celi et mundi,” or book 2 of Aristotle’s *De caelo*.

33. Stanbury, “Ecochaucer,” 12.

34. For a discussion of how the animal world functions mimetically in relation to the human, see Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human*.

35. For instance, Barbara Newman (*God and the Goddesses*, 111–15) reads the problem of female agency in the poem as one that would be topically relevant to a potential match between Richard II and Anne of Bohemia.

36. “The ‘Parliament of Fowls’ and Late Medieval Voluntarism: Part I,” and “The ‘Parliament of Fowls’ and Late Medieval Voluntarism: Part II”; quotation from “Part I,” 6. These articles were reprinted as “Choice Without Preference, Preference Without Choice in the *Parliament of Fowls*,” chapter 4 in Lynch’s *Chaucer’s Philosophical Visions*.

37. Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 114.

38. Aristotle says that a bird’s life consists in procreation and feeding; see *History of Animals* 8.1 (589a4–10). *History of Animals* 8.3 (592a28–594a4) is concerned with bird physiognomy in relation to the natural inclination characteristic of each species.

39. See, for instance, Emsley, “By Evene Acord.” While the *Riverside Chaucer* glosses “evene acord” as “mutual agreement,” it is more appropriate to gloss it as “reciprocal need,” a natural philosophical meaning attested by *MED*, s.v. ‘accord’ (n.), sense 6a.

40. Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things*, 2:849, ll. 8–10, and 857, ll. 22–23.

41. Courtenay, *Covenant and Causality*, chap. 9, p. 99.

42. *MED*, s.v. ‘priken’ (v.), sense 5c: “to excite amorous instincts; arouse amorous instincts in (sb.).”

43. *MED*, s.v. ‘hap’ (n.).

44. Trevisa, *The Governance of Kings and Princes*, p. 15, ll. 25–29. On the context of Giles's work in the thirteenth century, see Briggs, *Giles of Rome's "De regimine principum."*

45. Trevisa, *Governance*, p. 14, ll. 14–15: "the end is nou3t onlich the laste bote also som what þat is beste."

46. Boece, bk. 5, pr. 1 (*Riverside Chaucer*, p. 457, ll. 33–34 and 61–62). Aristotle discusses chance and causality in *Physics* 2.4–5 (195b31–197a36); the example of buried treasure is found in *Metaphysics* 6.30 (1025a14–18).

47. Boece, bk. 5, pr. 1 (*Riverside Chaucer*, p. 458, ll. 90–97).

48. A student of Aquinas—but one who used his predecessor's works selectively—Giles was censured in 1277 in an investigation that emerged from the same environment as Tempier's Aristotelian condemnations and one that many historians believe was a posthumous censure of Aquinas, given the overlap between his positions and those defended by Giles. Wielockx, "Le Ms. Paris Nat. Lat. 16096 et la condamnation du 7 mars 1277," notes that the action against Giles was separate but related to Tempier's condemnation.

49. For one recent legal interpretation of the poem that suggests wardship as the most relevant context for understanding the interchange between Nature and the formel eagle, see Havelly, "Nature's Yerde and Ward."

50. For the details of this debate in the thirteenth century, see [Chapter 3](#) above.

51. Gelber, *It Could Have Been Otherwise*, 108.

52. *Covenant and Causality*, IX, p. 99.

53. Gelber, "Laughter and Deception," summarizes this fourteenth-century critique concisely in her consideration of Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* and the *Nun's Priest's Tale*.

54. Economou, *Goddess Natura*, 147.

55. Hansen, *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender*, 128.

56. Gabrovsky (*Chaucer the Alchemist*, 201–24) interestingly argues for Chaucer's conspicuous engagement with the language of modal logic (as well as possible world theory) throughout the *Parliament*. My own sense is that this scholastic language is similar to the professional jargon found in the pilgrim portraits in the General Prologue of the *Canterbury Tales*; that is, it alerts us to a conversation in which the author participates but that his audience would not necessarily be expected to follow in all of its complexity.

57. *MED*, s.v. 'plesaunce' (n.1), sense 2b.

58. On the effect of the 1277 condemnation, see [Chapter 2](#) above.

59. Gelber, *It Could Have Been Otherwise*, 1–2. On this question, see also Courtenay, "Dialectic of Divine Omnipotence in the Age of Chaucer."

60. Courtenay, *Covenant and Causality*, IX, p. 102 (emphases original).

61. On these hypotheticals, see Murdoch, "From Social into Intellectual Factors," 289–97; and Grant, *History of Natural Philosophy*, 200–215. On the plurality of worlds, see Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination*.

62. See Dolnikowski, *Thomas Bradwardine*; and Spade, "Insolubilia and Bradwardine's Theory of Signification," 116.

63. This is not meant to imply that there was an independent understanding of a *potentia absoluta* separate from a *potentia ordinata*. William Courtenay, "Dialectic of Divine Omnipotence in the Age of Chaucer," 116, rightly reminds us that "it was never a description of two forms of divine power, one absolute and the other ordained, but two ways of looking at or talking about *one* divine power" (emphasis Courtenay).

64. Ockham's model of God's radical contingency and his belief that human knowledge can ever only be probable rather than certain was an extreme version of Augustinianism that had made church authorities uncomfortable. In 1323, a papal commission was charged with determining if there were erroneous or heretical propositions to be found in his writings. Ockham's subsequent excommunication, however, was predominantly due to his political involvement in the papal schism and his opinions on Franciscan poverty. On this cultural milieu, see Courtenay, *Ockham and Ockhamism*. For a succinct overview of

Ockham's natural philosophy and his challenges to Aristotle's physics, see Goddu, "Ockham's Philosophy of Nature."

65. Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire*, 94.

66. *Image*, 1.5 (p. 76).

67. Leicester, *Disenchanted Self*, 9–10.

68. Reason's recounting of the Virginia exemplum is found at ll. 5559–628 of the *Roman de la Rose*; Nature's comments on her relation to art occur at ll. 16135–218. *The Riverside Chaucer* notes that these borrowings were first remarked upon by the editor Tyrwhitt. In a more recent view of Chaucer's borrowings from the *Roman*, Pelen, "Murder and Immortality," focuses on the violence of the *Physician's Tale* in relation to that found in the *Pardoner's Tale*.

69. *Roman de la Rose*, ed. Lecoy, ll. 5605–9; trans. Dahlberg, 114.

70. Gower's exemplum can be found in "Confessio Amantis," 7.5131–306.

71. Middleton, "Physician's Tale and Love's Martyrs," 11.

72. *Roman de la Rose*, ll. 5602–3; trans. Dahlberg, 114.

73. *MED*, s.v. 'moten' (v.), sense 2a–2b.

74. Cf. *MED*, s.v. 'yeven' (v.), sense 1a.

75. *Roman de la Rose*, ll. 5733–58; trans. Dahlberg, 116.

76. *DMF*, s.v. 'convenable' (adj.), sense b2: "Qui est approprié à ce qu'il faut, qui est nécessaire."

77. Middleton, "Physician's Tale and Love's Martyrs," 18.

78. The speech of Chaucer's Nature closely echoes that of Jean de Meun's Nature at *Roman de la Rose*, ll. 16135–218.

79. *Roman de la Rose*, ed. Lecoy, ll. 15985, 15988; trans. Dahlberg, 271. On the discussion of art and nature in the *Physician's Tale* as opposed to that found in the *Rose*, see Chance, *The Mythographic Chaucer*, 264.

80. *Roman de la Rose*, ed. Lecoy, ll. 16033–34; trans. Dahlberg, 272. On the Nature and Art distinction in Jean de Meun, see Paré, *Les idées et les lettres au XIII^e siècle*, 203–4. According to Sylvia Huot, "nature is the only true artist" for Jean de Meun; see "Romance of the Rose" and Its Medieval Readers, 224.

81. *Physics* 2.1 (192b9–23). This distinction would persist well into the Renaissance; see Schmitt, *John Case and Aristotelianism in Renaissance England*, 191–216.

82. Thomas Aquinas, *In octo libros De Physico auditu sive Physicorum Aristotelis commentaria*, 2.1 §292 (p. 73).

83. Aristotle, *Physics* 2.8 (199b29–31).

84. Bacon, *Opera*, ed. Brewer, 1.1 (p. 523). Bacon's authorship of this text is not universally accepted.

85. Cf. the corresponding passages in Alan of Lille that emphasize Nature's role as subordinate copier of divine forms; see *De planctu naturae* 6.14–16 (pp. 78–81).

86. *Roman de la Rose*, ed. Lecoy, ll. 19121–32; trans. Dahlberg, 316.

87. *PVH*, ll. 1541–52. On Deguileville's personification of Nature, see [Chapter 4](#) above.

88. Burger, "Doing What Comes Naturally," 119.

89. Middleton, "Physician's Tale and Love's Martyrs," 16: "The Physician's 'sentence' fails to acknowledge the pathos generated by the final scene between father and daughter." This is a common critical view; see, for instance, Ramsey, "The Sentence of It Sooth Is."

90. Nauta, "A Weak Chapter in the Book of Nature," 148.

91. Ruggiers, *The Art of the Canterbury Tales*, 122–23.

92. Williams, *Keywords*, 219.

93. Chaucer's familiarity with the *Pèlerinage* has long been acknowledged, since he was known to have translated from it an alphabetical hymn to the Virgin Mary; see the discussion in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 1076–77; and Dor, "L'ABC de Chaucer." It is becoming increasingly clear that the *Pèlerinage*, extremely popular in England, was a significant and pervasive influence on the later English poet. Helen Phillips, "Chaucer and Deguileville,"

argues that Chaucer knew the whole of the *Pèlerinage* as well as other works. Houghton, “Works of Guillaume de Deguileville,” discusses the allegorist’s wider reception in late fourteenth-century England, including by Langland. Lydgate’s own translation of the *Pèlerinage*, discussed in [Chapter 6](#) below, leaves space in his manuscript for the copying of Chaucer’s *ABC*.

94. Grant, *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling*, ix.

95. Braidotti, “Animals, Anomalies, and Inorganic Others,” 528.

96. Yamamoto, *Boundaries of the Human*. On how the bestiaries produce exemplary meaning in relation to the human more generally, see Mann, *From Aesop to Reynard*; and Baxter, “Learning from Nature.”

97. Crane, “For the Birds,” 26.

98. Harman, *Prince of Networks*, 212.

CHAPTER 6. “KYNDELY RESON” ON TRIAL

1. On this movement, see Weisheipl, *Nature and Motion in the Middle Ages*, 256.

2. North, “Natural Philosophy in Late Medieval Oxford,” 71. See also Sylla, “Medieval Quantification of Qualities.”

3. North, “Natural Philosophy,” 70.

4. Jones, “Information and Science,” 100.

5. On the influence of the plague, see North, “1348 and All That.” For an assessment of these various factors, see Courtenay, “The Transformation of English Scholasticism” in *Schools and Scholars*, 327–55.

6. Fletcher, “Developments in the Faculty of Arts,” 317. On Arundel’s visitations to early fifteenth-century Oxford and the theological climate there, see Catto, “Wyclif and Wycliffism.”

7. Courtenay, “Transformation,” in *Schools and Scholars*, 355.

8. Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (1970), 68.

9. See Grant, *History of Natural Philosophy*, 274: “From its high point in the fourteenth century, medieval natural philosophy underwent significant changes in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries”; and see also Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes*, 12. Similarly, Crombie, *Robert Grosseteste and the Origins of Experimental Science*, 296, observes that, after the fourteenth-century flourishing in Oxford and Paris, natural philosophy “seems practically to have ceased for nearly 200 years, down to its classical formulation by Newton.” For a summary of these narratives of late medieval scientific decline, see Ozment, *Age of Reform*, 8–20. We find a similar narrative of decline in theological writings after Arundel’s 1409 constitutions; the most concise statement of this shift is Watson, “Censorship and Cultural Change.” This perspective has been somewhat modified by Catto, “After Arundel.”

10. Kratzmann, *Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations*, 239.

11. *Les Eschéz d’Amours*, ed. Heyworth and O’Sullivan. The second recension of Deguileville’s poem appeared in Philippe Maupeu and Graham Robert Edwards, eds., *Le livre du pèlerin de vie humaine* (1355) (Paris: Livre de Poche, 2015); however, this book was already in press.

12. For the attribution by Stow, see Edwards, “John Stow and Middle English Literature.” Lydgate’s authorship was debated in a series of articles in *Notes and Queries*; see Walls, “Did Lydgate Translate the *Pèlerinage de Vie Humaine*?”; and Green, “Lydgate and Deguileville Once More.”

13. The translator’s prologue prefaced to the verse translation of the *Pilgrimage* dates it to 1426 and claims that it was done at the behest of the Earl of Salisbury (though it does not name Lydgate as that translator); see Lydgate, *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, ed. Furnivall and Locock, ll. 114–85. Subsequent citations refer to this edition. London, British Library, MS Harley 4826 (which includes the translation of the *Secretum secretorum*

attributed to Lydgate) includes a picture of the poet, standing next to a pilgrim, presenting a book to his patron, the Earl of Salisbury. Based on the available circumstantial evidence, Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (1997), 27–28, concludes that Lydgate's authorship seems probable.

14. Simpson, "The Economy of Involucrum," 402. Critics who express doubts about Lydgate's authorship have noted that the themes characteristic of this poem—its interest in the matter of the *Roman de la Rose* as well as Chaucerian allusions—are also characteristic of other fifteenth-century authors such as Richard Roos and John Shirley; see Boucher and Pouzet, "La matière des *Échecs amoureux*," 163–65. Even if the present state of our knowledge cannot prove Lydgate's authorship beyond doubt, there are no linguistic or manuscript arguments that would seem to compel us to set aside the traditional attribution to Lydgate.

15. On the stylistic echoes between the two works, especially the Lydgatean habit of "reduplication of expression," see Sieper's edition of *Reson and Sensuallyte*, 2:2–4 and 43–59 passim; all subsequent citations of this work refer parenthetically to this edition by line number. On the apparatus, see Kamath, "Periphery and Purpose," 38.

16. Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 316.

17. Recent assessments of these characteristic themes include: Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture*; Scanlon and Simpson, *John Lydgate*; Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power*; Cooper and Denny-Brown, *Lydgate Matters*; and Galloway, "John Lydgate and the Origins of Vernacular Humanism."

18. Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, 219.

19. On this broad topic, see Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent*; Lahey, *Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif*; Somerset, "Expanding the Langlandian Canon"; and Ghosh, "University-Learning, Theological Method, and Heresy."

20. See, for instance, the debate between Ralph Strode and John Wyclif over ecclesiastical temporalities. Appealing to the idea of the Aristotelian mean, Strode asserts that the church uses its goods in a strategic way. Wyclif responds that the church should measure itself against Christ rather than Aristotle; see Wyclif, *Opera minora*, ed. Loserth and Matthew, 188–89. Discussed in Olson, "Geoffrey Chaucer," 574. On Wyclif's invocation of Aristotle's natural science, see Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy*, 31.

21. Wyclif, *English Works*, ed. Matthew, 6: "if þei traueilen faste in aristole and new sophymes to ben clepyd maistres, and þan traueilen not in holy writt but veyn pleies & corioustees, and excusen hem her-bi fro preiynge and rysynge at mydy3t, þei ben ypocritis; for þei don not goddis seruyce in hem selfe but drawn opere men þer-fro." In the same vein, another English Lollard treatise decries those who prefer philosophy to scripture, asserting that John the Baptist was "more worþ þan þes philosophres, Plato and Aristotle, boþe in liif and in witt"; see Wyclif, *Select English Work*, ed. Arnold, 2:5.

22. From Sermon 59 in Hudson and Gradon, *English Wycliffite Sermons*, 2:21 (l. 2).

23. *Ibid.*, 23–24 (ll. 70–88).

24. The relevant note in *English Wycliffite Sermons* suggests that this discussion of seed refers to Augustine's theory of "seminal ideas"; the Aristotelian idea of physical teleology seems the more direct reference in context and also explains the comment about "philosophres" (here meaning natural philosophers) who "glauvern"—or speak deceitfully—an unlikely reference to Augustine or one of his commentators.

25. In summarizing Wycliffite views on the Eucharist, this paragraph draws on the synoptic descriptions found in Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, 281–90; and Keen, "Wyclif, the Bible, and Transubstantiation." On orthodox Aristotelian understandings of the Eucharist, see Adams, "Aristotle and the Sacrament of the Altar." According to Hudson and Gradon, *English Wycliffite Sermons*, 4:50–56, the treatment of transubstantiation in the English sermons was "remarkably consistent."

26. Catto, "Wyclif and the Cult of the Eucharist," 271. On Wyclif's evolving views of transubstantiation, see Bakker, "Réalisme et remanence"; and Lahey, *John Wyclif*, 102–34.

27. Wyclif's views were condemned in 1381 but English Lollard sermons continued to appeal to "kynde" not just in reference to the nature of the bread but also to the divine nature accompanying it: "þe breed of þe sacrid oost is verry breed in his kynde, and is eten bodili; but it is Goddis bodi in figure. And it is þe same bodi þat is Goddis bodi in his kynde ... þis oost eten bodili and goostli of sum men, but cristis bodi in his kynde is not eten bodili"; quoted in Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, 283. This notion of a shared presence of bread and Christ will later develop into a memorial and symbolic view of the sacrament where men are urged to eat the host "goostly, þat is to haue muynde of hym, how kyndely he suffrede for man"; see *Sermons on the Sunday Epistles* 22, in Hudson and Gradon, *English Wycliffite Sermons*, 1:569 (ll. 3940).

28. The first quotation comes from Sermon 75, *English Wycliffite Sermons*, 2:116 (l. 148); the second from Ferial Sermon 125, *English Wycliffite Sermons*, 3:8 (l. 40).

29. Hudson, *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, text 21A, "The Eucharist I," l. 78 (p. 112).

30. Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, ed. Sargent, xi. Subsequent quotations refer to this edition.

31. Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, 163–65.

32. The idea that Aristotle was given special insight by angelic means—a recurrent theme in pro-Aristotelian texts—is summarily rejected by Love (citing St. Paul) in the next passage: "In þe which byleue by reson we shoulde be so saddely sette'. þat after þe sentence of þe apostle Poule, þough þere came done an Angele fro heuene & tauht þe contrarye'. we sholde not 3iue credence to him, bot halde him as cursede, bot soþe it is þat þere may none trewe Angele teche þe contrarye of þe byleue of holy churche, & þefore he þat so doþ'. is þe Angele of Sathanas & not of god, as bene alle þe fals lollardes" (p. 237, ll. 17–23).

33. See [Chapter 1](#) and [3](#).

34. Much has been written on how Love's rhetoric encourages identification between reader and Christ, beginning with Salter, *Nicholas Love's "Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ"*. Beckwith, *Christ's Body*, 63–70, argues that this mode of identification, while intended to bring the laity under clerical control, actually opened up a space for lay devotional practice apart from church authority. For the optics of Love's affective piety in the "vision contest" of late medieval England, see Stanbury, *Visual Object of Desire*, esp. chap. 6, "Nicholas Love's *Mirror*: Dead Images and the Life of Christ." For a rethinking of how Love's work asks his readers to "feel like a woman," see McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 128–49. More recently, Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition*, 207–25, has argued that Love's text participates in a more widespread desire to limit imaginative engagement to those earthly aspects of Christ's existence, and that this change in scope represents both a response to nonconformity as well as to changing academic understandings of cognition.

35. Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in evangelia*, 2.26 (PL 74.1197c): "Fides non habet meritum cui ratio humana praebet experimentum."

36. See, e.g., Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*; and Watson, "Censorship."

37. On the translation of the Bible in Old French, see Sneddon, "The 'Bible du XIIIe siècle'; and Hamburger, "Rewriting History."

38. On Charles V's program of translations, see Poirion, *Le moyen âge*, 95–105. For a discussion of the situation in Paris and England, see Courtenay, "The University of Paris at the Time of Jean Buridan and Nicole Oresme."

39. The literature on this conflict is substantial; see Oberman, "*Via Antiqua* and *Via Moderna*"; Courtenay, "*Antiqui* and *Moderni* in Late Medieval Thought"; and Hoenen, "*Via Antiqua* and *Via Moderna* in the Fifteenth Century." In France, such ecclesiastical arguments had political dimensions: in the late fifteenth century, the French monarchy even intervened directly in academic natural philosophical disputes on the side of traditional Aristotelian understandings of physics and their implications. By a royal decree of 1474, Louis XV mandated that the University of Paris reject the nominalist teachings of the *moderni* and instead return to the realist views of Aristotle, Aquinas, and others.

40. Quoted in Chroust, "A Contribution to the History of the Medieval Discussion," 237. This quodlibet is also discussed in Imbach, "Aristoteles in der Hölle."

41. See note 12 above. The Middle English poem's editor Ernst Sieper emphasizes that this title is provided only by Stow (*Reson and Sensuallyte*, 2:1–2), but cf. the comments of Heyworth and O'Sullivan, the modern editors of the *Eschéz d'Amours*, 24–26.

42. Alan of Lille, *De planctu naturae*, 6.6 (pp. 70–71).

43. See *MED*, s.v. 'sensualite' (n.), which defines it as "(a) The natural capacity for receiving physical sensation understood as an inferior power of the soul concerned with the body; (b) physical desire or appetite, lust; a sinful, passionate emotion; also, lustful, sinful nature; (c) the body."

44. On the dating of *Reson and Sensuallyte*, see Sieper's editorial comments, 2:5–8; Sieper cites previous critics who date the poem to 1406–8, while he believes that one can only say that it was written "before 1412." On the dating of *Love*, see the introduction to the Sargent edition, xiv–xvi.

45. Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 30. On the poem's relation to its intended audience, see G. Heyworth, "Historical Context and Audience," in *Eschéz d'Amours*, 11–20, who argues that the poem's audience "may have shifted in answer to historical exigencies" (15), moving from addressing a "vaguely dissolute youth, aristocratic and academic" to offering advice to "a ruling nobility and ultimately, perhaps, a future king" (17).

46. The most complete discussion of the poem's manuscript and literary context is the extensive introduction found in the edition of Heyworth and O'Sullivan, *Eschéz d'Amours*, 3–5, 41–47. Briefly, the poem exists today in only two manuscripts, both incomplete: Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Fr. App 23, which, though missing the opening and closing sections, does include a set of extensive Latin glosses; and Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Oc. 66, also missing the ending and badly damaged by water and mold throughout. The Heyworth and O'Sullivan edition, based on multispectral imaging of the Dresden manuscript, supersedes the many partial transcriptions or synoptic versions that have appeared earlier. These include Sieper, *Les Echecs amoureux*; Galpin, "*Les Eschez Amoureux*"; Mettlich, *Die Schachpartie in der Prosabearbeitung*; Kraft, *Die Liebesgarten-Allegorie der "Echecs amoureux"*; and Raimondi, "*Les Eschés Amoureux*." Subsequent citations refer by line number to the Heyworth and O'Sullivan edition.

Several studies have discussed either the *Eschéz* or *Reson and Sensuallyte* (or both together) in relation to the late medieval genre of moralized chess allegories; see Juel, "Loving the Creator and His Creations"; Adams, *Power Play*; and Di Gangi, "Lydgate's 'Mesure,'"

47. On this pattern of amplification in general, see Sieper's edition of *Reson and Sensuallyte*, 2:43–59. I will argue that this amplification goes beyond the usual Lydgatean dilation through aureation and reduplication to show an increased concern with the problem of natural reason.

48. E.g., the glosses reproduced in Sieper's edition and found at ll. 6047, 6079, and 6273. Sieper discusses the annotations in his edition, *Reson* 2:4. Similar Latin tags are also found in the Vienna manuscript of the *Eschéz*; for example, cf. *Reson* l. 6047 to *Eschéz* l. 4698, where we find "ut dicitur in secundo celi" (gloss reproduced on p. 612), and cf. *Reson* l. 6273 to *Eschéz* l. 4767, where Aristotle's authority is cited in both cases regarding the sweet scent of trees touched by rainbows. For a discussion of the *Eschéz* tags, see F. Coulson, "The Latin Glosses of Venice Fr. App. 123," in Heyworth and O'Sullivan's edition of *Eschéz d'Amours*, 95–99. There is critical disagreement over how the glosses are to be read. Unlike Raimondi ("Les Eschés Amoureux," 68), Coulson denies that "the Latin glosses and the French text are conceived as a unity and intended to be read in tandem" (97). Minnis notes that the shared glosses suggest that "someone—perhaps the English author himself—wanted the translation to share the *mise-en-page* of its original" (*Magister Amoris*, 290). My own view is that the tags in *Reson* are most likely authorial. Similar scholastic tags are to be found in several manuscripts of the *Roman de la Rose* as well as book 7 of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, a

natural philosophical *summa*; such similarities suggest that Lydgate intended his poem to be read as part of an ongoing conversation between academic understandings of nature and more popular ones. Whether or not we accept the tags as authorial, the effect is the same: the practice reinforces the ways in which literary and scientific texts formed a shared reading community.

49. See Chartier, *Fifteenth-Century English Translations*, ed. Blayney, p. 30, ll. 28–36, p. 31, ll. 1–22.

50. Simpson, “Economy of Involucrum,” 391.

51. The corresponding passage in *Eschéz* would fall between ll. 3130 and 3131.

52. This scholastic language is absent from the comparable passage in the *Eschéz*, ll. 3631–34.

53. The comparable passage in *Eschéz* is found at ll. 765–76.

54. See *Eschéz*, p. 151 n. 18. This distinction would also be familiar from Aquinas’s elaboration of a *modus parabolicus*. Alastair Minnis (*Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 131) observes that it is employed by later writers such as Nicholas Trevet to show how a parable “expresses one idea on the surface of the words, which is the sign and outer rind, and another in the inward understanding, which is the things signified and inner pith.”

55. See Boccaccio, *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, 15.8; in *Tutte le opere*, vol. 7–8, pp. 1544–48.

56. The corresponding passage in *Eschéz* would have been found between ll. 4774 and 4775. This pattern continues throughout the section. For example, the maiden’s fifth pawn is described briefly in three lines (4784–86) in the *Eschéz*:

Li quins paonnéz d’autre part
Y ot pourtrait un anelet
Trop faitich et trop gentelet.

The gloss merely enlarges this neutral description (p. 615). In *Reson and Sensuallyte*, this passage is expanded to over forty lines (6332–74), including the assertion that women always keep secrets since their mouth is as “cloos as ys a ryng” (6374). Next to these lines we find the gloss “¶ Cuius contrarium est verum.”

57. On the biographical background of Évrart de Conty, see the introduction to the critical edition of *Le livre des Eschez amoureux moralisés*, ed. Guichard-Tesson and Roy, liii–lvi. Further citations refer to this text by page number.

58. Évrart de Conty, *L’Harmonie des sphères*, ed. Hyatte and Ponchard-Hyatte, xv. For a discussion of the commentary’s audience, see Legaré, “La réception du poème des *Eschez amoureux*.”

59. The section on “philosophie naturelle” occupies ten folios; see *Eschez amoureux moralisés*, ed. Guichard-Tesson and Roy, 208–30.

60. On the theory of fiction set out in the commentary’s prologue more generally, see Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 282–96.

61. Cf. *Roman de la Rose*, ed. Lecoy, ll. 16135–82; trans. Dahlberg, 273–74.

62. For the use of the Middle English “philosophie” to mean not just learning or moral philosophy, but natural philosophy in particular, see the Introduction. The comparable passage in the *Eschéz* is found at ll. 3717–52.

63. *Eschéz*, ll. 3603–4 with the Latin commentary found on p. 610. This gloss is omitted in *Reson and Sensuallyte*. For a discussion of the controversy over whether Nature or her amanuensis Aristotle could err, see [Chapter 2](#).

64. On Gerson’s treatise and its representation of Nature, see [Chapter 4](#).

65. On the manuscript reading of this passage, see Hult, *Debate of the Romance of the Rose*, 126 n. 65.

66. Nievergelt and Kamath, *Pèlerinage Allegories of Guillaume de Deguileville*, 3.

67. On the attribution of this poem to Lydgate, see notes 12 and 13 above. Of the three extant manuscripts held by the British Library, Lydgate’s name appears only on MS Stowe

952; Cotton Vitellius C.13 is imperfect at the start due to fire damage, while Cotton Tiberius A.7 contains only a later fragment of the poem, about four thousand lines.

68. See *The Pilgrimage of the Lyfe of the Manhode*, ed. Henry. Subsequent citations from the prose version refer to this edition.

69. Camille, "The Iconoclast's Desire," 167–68. Camille's most sustained engagement with the visual tradition of Deguileville's manuscripts is his postgraduate thesis "The Illustrated Manuscripts of Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pèlerinages*, 1330–1426." The Lydgate manuscript is also briefly mentioned in Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, 295–96; and Camille, "Reading the Printed Image."

70. Cooper, "Markys ... off the Workman."

71. Both Stowe 952 and Cotton Vitellius C.13 contain the marginal Latin tags for Aristotle's doctrines; they appear at l. 5609 and l. 5888 respectively.

72. This technical language is found throughout the 1426 version; cf. l. 5618 ("skyle"); l. 5739 ("poynt"); ll. 5810–15; l. 5845 ("quantyte"); ll. 5880–93.

73. Cf. *Pilgrimage of the Lyfe of the Manhode*, ed. Henry, p. 42, ll. 1725–27: "þanne muste þe hows bi resoun be lasse þan þe good þat is put þerinne, and so shal þi seyinges be false."

74. Kamath, "Periphery and Purpose," 44.

75. See, e.g., Aquinas's rejection of these arguments in *ST* 3a.75 and 76.

76. Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, 282; emphases original. Hudson discusses Lollard eucharistic doctrine more generally on pp. 281–90; see also Catto, "Wyclif and the Cult of the Eucharist."

77. Lahey, "Late Medieval Eucharistic Theology," 532–36.

78. *Twenty-Six Political and Other Poems*, ed. Kail, 104–5; emphases mine.

79. Catto, "Wyclif and the Cult of the Eucharist," 281.

80. Letter 338 to Cardinal Haimeric, in *Sancti Bernardi opera*, ed. Leclercq, Talbot, and Rochais, 8:278.

81. Pecock, *The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*, 1.3 (pp. 12–13). My all too brief discussion of Pecock draws on several studies. The autobiographical background can be found in Scase, *Reginald Pecock*. Particularly apposite here are the insightful articles of Stephen E. Lahey, "Reginald Pecock on the Authority of Reason, Scripture and Tradition"; and Kantik Ghosh, "Bishop Reginald Pecock and the Idea of 'Lollardy.'" For Pecock's place among his contemporary theologians, see also Catto, "Theology After Wycliffism," esp. 275–78.

82. *Reginald Pecock's Book of Faith*, 97, 145–51; quote at 147.

83. Lahey, "Pecock on the Authority of Reason," 238.

EPILOGUE

Note to epigraph: *Gabriel Harvey's Marginalia*, ed. Smith, 160–61.

1. Jardine and Grafton, "Studied for Action."

2. *Gabriel Harvey's Marginalia*, 162–63:

Saepe miratus sum, Chaucerum, et Lidgatum tantos fuisse in diebus illis astronomos. Hodiernum poetas tam esse ignaros astronomiae: praeter Buclaeum, Astrophilum, Blagravum: alios perpaucos, Uraniae filios. Pudet ipsum Spenserum, etsi Sphaerae, astrolabique non plane ignarum; suae in astronomicis Canonibus, tabulis, instrumentisque imperitiae. Praesertim, ex quo vidit Blagraui nostri Margaritam Mathematicam. Qui né Pontano quidem, aut Palingenio, aut Buchanano, aut etiam Bartasio cedit, exquisita vtriusque Globi, astrolabij, baculique familiaris scientia. Vt alter iam Diggesius, vel Hariotus, vel etiam Deus videatur. Aureum calcar non rudium aemulorum.

3. *OED*, s.v. 'artist' (n.), sense 5a: "A person skilled in one of the seven liberal arts; obs."

4. *Gabriel Harvey's Marginalia*, 159–60. Similar passages are adduced in Lydgate.

5. Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, 199.

6. Many critics have written on the Renaissance reception of Chaucer. For a comparison of Harvey's annotations to Chaucer and those of his contemporary Francis Thynne, see Cook, "How Francis Thynne Read His Chaucer," esp. 221–24. Early modern readers also emphasized the proverbial Chaucer, calling out the works' epigrammatic moral content; see Harbus, "A Renaissance Reader's English Annotations." On the question of what Alice Miskimin long ago called the "Renaissance Chaucer" more generally, see the essays collected in Krier, ed., *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance*.

7. See Burns, "'A Proverb of Versatile Mutability'"; and Powrie, "Spenser's Mutabilitie and the Indeterminate Universe."

8. A personified Nature appears briefly in Marvell as well as in Milton's *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*; on her rhetorical function in these writers, see McColley, "The Commodious Ark." Borlik, *Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature*, 61, tries to argue that "personifications of Dame Nature are not all that rare in early modern England"; however, the rather short list he then gives underscores my point that her appearances are more epiphenomenal than ethically substantive. He offers a stronger argument, not about personification but about impersonation—not to mention the intersection of iconography and realpolitik—in images of Elizabeth I represented as Dame Nature (68–72). Though medieval personified Nature rarely speaks in her own voice, she is not absent. Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, charts nostalgia for a lost natural world in the works of seventeenth-century women writers such as Mary Wroth and Margaret Cavendish.

9. For the view that Spenser's Nature is coextensive with that found in Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*, see, for instance, Knowlton, "Spenser and Nature." Glenn A. Steinberg ("Chaucer's Mutability in Spenser's *Mutabilitie Cantos*," 29) argues, by contrast, that "for Spenser, disorder in the cosmos seems to be an inherent and pervasive characteristic of the cosmos itself ... but for Chaucer, disorder seems to be primarily a product of human influence." Thomas Bulger ("Platonism in Spenser's *Mutability Cantos*") contends that Spenser's Nature differs from her medieval prototypes in that she represents the "Platonic nous" whose ineffability is similar to that of the Christian God. Early modern critics have also sought to historicize Spenser's Nature, pointing out how her portrayal resonates with Queen Elizabeth's selfrepresentation; see Borlik, *Ecocriticism*.

10. Cf. *Faerie Queene*, 7.7.60–64 to the New Testament account referenced in Matthew 17:1–9, Mark 9:2–8, and Luke 9:28–36.

11. It is true that in Bernard Silvestris's *Cosmographia*, Natura is separated off from the figure of Physis, but this representation was not particularly influential on later medieval poets. In the late medieval tradition, "mutabilitie" was associated with Fortune, with the inconstancy of earthly experience in comparison with the eternal stability of the divine; see MED, s.v. 'mutabilite' (n.), sense 2.

12. See Powrie, "Spenser's Mutabilitie," 78–79.

13. Patricia Parker (*Inescapable Romance*, 57–64) sees "dilation" as invoking a Neoplatonic idea of emanation. Powrie ("Spenser's Mutabilitie," 83–84) believes that Nature is describing an Aristotelian process of change here that is soon to be overturned by Copernican science. See also Teskey, "Night Thoughts on Mutability."

14. In this way, Spenser's Nature functions similarly to his use of archaic language, language that, as Lucy Munro argues, Spenser employs to respond to new pressures on what it means to be an English Protestant poet in the 1590s; see *Archaic Style*.

15. Tiffany, *Toy Medium*, esp. chap. 1, "Poetics and Materialism."

16. On her subsequent early modern appearances, where her power could be seen to rival that of the Judeo-Christian God, see Borlik, *Ecocriticism*, 67–68.

17. Introductory and foundational studies include Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* and John Case and Aristotelianism in *Renaissance England*; Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution*; and Stephen Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture*. Other significant studies and collections of essays include Kusakawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy*; Leijenhorst, Lüthy, and Thijssen, eds., *The Dynamics of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy from*

Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century; and Craig Martin, *Subverting Aristotle*.

18. On the dramatic changes in how academics read, used, and commented upon Aristotle's *De anima* between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, see the essays collected in Perler, *Transformations of the Soul*. On how Aristotelian theories of substance and matter get transformed over the same period, see Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes*, 1274–1671.

19. Proposition 50, in Luther's "Disputation Against Scholastic Theology" (1517); see *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Lull, 16.

20. Erasmus, *Opera omnia*, series 4, vol. 3, p. 144, ll. 366–67. On the hostile reception of Aristotle in the early modern period, including those who took up the mantra of Aristotle's capacity for error, see Bianchi, *Studi sull'Aristotelismo del Rinascimento*, esp. chap. 4.

21. Hobbes, *English Works*, 3:670 (emphasis original).

22. See Mercer, "Vitality and Importance of Early Modern Aristotelianism"; and Martin, *Subverting Aristotle*.

23. The *OED* attests the first concatenation of "moral philosophy" as occurring in 1443 and of "moral philosopher" in 1499; s.v. 'moral' (adj.), special uses, S2. Perhaps the major transitional figure here would be Reginald Pecock, who theorizes "moral philosophie" in relation to the claims of natural philosophy in several mid-fifteenth-century works, including the *Donet*, the *Book of Faith*, and the *Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*. On the Middle English meaning of "philosophie," see the Introduction.

24. Schmitt, "Aristotle's *Ethics* in the Sixteenth Century," 88–89 (nonsequential pagination).

25. Schmitt, *John Case*, 23.

26. On the reduction in the natural philosophical component of the Renaissance arts curriculum, see Schmitt, *John Case*, 41; and Reif, "Textbook Tradition in Natural Philosophy."

27. The following discussion of the print history of Aristotle in the English Renaissance is indebted to Cranz, *A Bibliography of Aristotle Editions, 1501–600*; and Kraye, "The Printing History of Aristotle in the Fifteenth Century."

28. *The Ethiques of Aristotle ...*, trans. John Wilkinson (London, 1547) (STC 774). This version is based on Brunetto Latini's Italian summary.

29. *Aristotles Politiques, or Discourses of government* (London, 1598) (STC 760) was based on the French translation of Louis Le Roy (ca. 1576).

30. On the editions of the *Problemata*, see Kraye, "Printing History," 210; and De Leemans and Goyens, *Aristotle's "Problemata" in Different Times and Tongues*. The *Secretum* was printed several times beginning with *Secreta secretorum: The Secrete of secretes of Aristotle* (London: R. Copland, 1528) (STC 770).

31. Thomas Taylor, *The Physics, or Physical Auscultation of Aristotle: With Copious Notes in Which the Substance Is Given of the Invaluable Commentaries of Simplicius* (1806).

32. Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie*, reproduced in Brewer, *Chaucer*, 1:120: "Chaucer, vndoubtedly did excellently in hys *Troylus* and *Cresseid*; of whom, truly I know not, whether to meruaile more, either that he in that mistie time, could see so clearely, or that wee in this cleare age, walke so stumblyngly after him. Yet had he great wants, fitte to be forgiuen, in so reuerent antiquity."

33. Spiller, *Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature*, 28–29.

34. For the overlap between scientific and literary discourse in the early modern period more generally, see the essays collected in Dear, *Literary Structure of Scientific Argument*; and Cummins and Burchell, *Science, Literature, and Rhetoric in Early Modern England*. In addition to Spiller's *Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature*, several recent monographs have explored the shared rhetorical strategies of these disciplines; see Ait-Touati, *Fictions of the Cosmos*; and Crane, *Losing Touch with Nature*.

35. *Sir Philip Sidney's Defense of Poesy*, ed. Soens.

36. Gaukroger, *Emergence*, chap. 6, "Reconstructing the Natural Philosopher," 196–227. See also Findlen, "Francis Bacon and the Reform of Natural History"; and the essays

collected in Condren, Gaukroger, and Hunter, *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe*.

37. Quoted in Gaukroger, *Emergence*, 223.

38. Even as seventeenth-century writers disdained the “fictions” of their predecessors (and, in some cases, their contemporaries), they also employed such fictions themselves and sought to theorize them; see Ait-Touati, *Fictions of the Cosmos*, esp. 97–110; and Harrison, “The Fashioned Image of Poetry.”

39. Speght’s 1598 edition calls Chaucer our “English Homer” and reproduces Sidney’s assessment of *Troilus and Criseyde*. Brewer, *Chaucer*, vol. 1, cites several other early modern writers who also compare Chaucer to Homer, including John Leland (93), Roger Ascham (99–101), and Thomas Nashe (128).

40. Boyle, *Enquiry*, 32.

41. *Ibid.*, 60–61.

42. *Ibid.*, 11.

43. On More and Spenser, see Passannante, *The Lucretian Renaissance*, 185–97.

44. The critical literature on Renaissance pastoral is vast; for recent accountings, see Borlik, *Ecocriticism*; and Hiltner, *What Else Is Pastoral?*

45. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, esp. 10–12, 39–43.

46. Latour, “An Attempt at a ‘Compositionist Manifesto,’” 476.

47. Steven Shapin (“Social Uses of Science,” 111–12) cautions against understanding the dualism that arose in the Scientific Revolution as the subsequent hallmark of the Enlightenment; he encourages us to see that there were “a number of species of natural knowledge, and a number of opposed Enlightenments.”

48. Aquinas’s views on will and inclination are discussed in [Chapter 3](#).

49. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 51–53. For a discussion of MacIntyre’s assumptions, see Robertson, “Abusing Aristotle.”

50. In *Il Saggiatore* [The Assayer], Galileo observes that “philosophy is written in this grand book, the universe, which stands continually open to our gaze. But the book cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and read the letters in which it is composed. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometric figures without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these, one wanders about in a dark labyrinth”; English translation in *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, trans. Drake, 237–38.

51. There are many versions of posthumanism; one of the most influential is that set out in N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*. It is useful to compare Hayles’s work to the deconstructionist version articulated by Cary Wolfe (*What Is Posthumanism?*) and the feminist version found in Stacy Alaimo (*Bodily Natures*).

52. Morton’s works include: *Ecology Without Nature*; “Ecologocentrism”; *The Ecological Thought*; “Queer Ecology”; and “Ecology as Text, Text as Ecology.”

53. Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, 7.

54. Braidotti, *Transpositions*, 116.

55. Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, 7 (emphasis original).

56. Hobbes, *English Works*, 3:678.

57. Plumwood, *Environmental Culture*, 56. This reclamation project is one that is shared among many feminist critics, environmental and otherwise; see Johnson, *Persons and Things*, 15–18, 188–207; and Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 98–100, 122.

58. Plumwood, *Environmental Culture*, 59–60.

59. The foundational texts include Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*; DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*; Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*; Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*; and Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*.

60. A particularly clear statement of how a revival of monism together with the assemblage model of Deleuze and Guattari provides the basis for such a flat ontology is found in Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 116–19.

61. Morton, “Queer Ecology,” 275. In his more recent writings, Morton applies his ideas

about the mesh of nature to textual environments, arguing that texts function just like living organisms. In “Ecology as Text,” he insists that “this is not simply an analogy.”

62. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 23, 25.

63. Robertson, “Medieval Materialism.”

64. Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, 19.

WORKS CITED

- Bernard of Clairvaux. *Sancti Bernardi opera*. 8 vols. Ed. Jean Leclercq, C. H. Talbot, and Henri Rochais. Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957–77.
- Bernard Silvestris. *The Commentary on Martianus Capella's "De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii."* Ed. Haijo Jan Westra. Studies and Texts 80. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986.
- . *Poetic Works*. Ed. and trans. Winthrop Wetherbee. Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 38. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015.
- Boccaccio, Giovanni. *Genealogie deorum gentilium*. Ed. Vittorio Zaccaria. In *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. Vittore Branca, vols. 7–8. 11–1813. Milan: Mondadori, 1998.
- Boethius. *Consolatio philosophiae*. In *The Theological Tractates; The Consolation of Philosophy*. Trans. H. F. Stewart, E. K. Rand, and S. J. Tester. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973.
- Bokenham, Osborn. *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*. Ed. Mary S. Serjeantson. EETS OS 206. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938.
- Bonaventure. *Breviloquium*. In *Tria opuscula Seraphici doctoris S. Bonaventurae. Breviloquium, Itinerarium mentis in Deum et De reductione artium ad theologiam*. Florence: Quaracchi, 1938.
- . *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*. Ed. Ferdinand M. Delorme. Florence: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1934.
- . *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. In *Tria opuscula Seraphici doctoris S. Bonaventurae. Breviloquium, Itinerarium mentis in Deum et De reductione artium ad theologiam*. Florence: Quaracchi, 1938.
- . *The Journey of the Soul into God: Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*. Ed. Philotheus Boehner; trans. Zachary Hayes. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002.
- Boyle, Robert. *A Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature*. Ed. Edward B. Davis and Michael Hunter. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Burley, Walter. *Liber de vita et moribus Philosophorum: Mit einer altspanischen Übersetzung der Eskurialbibliothek*. Ed. Hermann Knust. Bibliothek Des Literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart 177. Tübingen: Laupp, 1886.
- Bury, Richard de. *Philobiblon: A Treatise on the Love of Books*. Ed. Samuel Hand; trans. John B. Inglis. Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1861.
- Chartier, Alain. *Fifteenth-Century English Translations of Alain Chartier's "Le Traité de l'Esperance" and "Le Quadriologue Invectif."* Ed. Margaret S. Blayney. EETS 270. London: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*. Ed. Heinrich Denifle and Émile Chatelain. 4 vols. Paris: Fratrum Delalain, 1889–97.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Larry D. Benson. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.
- . *The Romaunt of the Rose*. Ed. Charles Dahlberg. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999.
- . *A Treatise on the Astrolabe*. Ed. Sigmund Eisner. Variorum Edition of *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, vol. 6, *The Prose Treatises*, pt. 1. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002.
- . *The Workes of Geffray Chaucer*. Ed. William Thynne. London: Thomas Godfray, 1532. STC 5080.
- Dante Alighieri. *Commedia*. Trans. John Sinclair. 3 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 1961.
- Deguileville, Guillaume de. *Le pèlerinage de vie humaine*. Ed. J. J. Stürzinger. Roxburghe Club 124. London: Nichols, 1893.
- . *Le pèlerinage Jhesu Crist*. Ed. J. J. Stürzinger. Roxburghe Club 133. London: Nichols, 1897.
- . *The Pilgrimage of Human Life*. Trans. Eugene Clasby. Garland Library of Medieval Literature 76. New York: Garland, 1992.

- . *The Pilgrimage of the Lyfe of the Manhode*. Ed. Avril Henry. 2 vols. EETS OS 288, 292. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- . *Le romant des trois pelerinaiges*. [Paris]: Jean Petit and Barthold Rembolt, [1517?].
- LeFèvre, Jean. *Le Respit de la Mort*. Ed. Geneviève Hasenohr-Esnos. Société des anciens textes français, 143. Paris: Picard, 1969.
- Les Echecs amoureux: Eine altfranzösische Nachahmung des Rosenromans und ihre Englische Übertragung*. Ed. Ernst Sieper. Weimar: Emil Felber, 1898.
- Les Eschéz d'Amours: A Critical Edition of the Poem and Its Latin Glosses*. Ed. Gregory Heyworth and Daniel E. O'Sullivan. Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts 10. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Erasmus, Desiderius. *Opera omnia*. Ser. 4, vol. 3. Ed. Clarence H. Miller. Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1979.
- Errores philosophorum*. Ed. Josef Koch and John O. Riedl. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1944.
- Évrart de Conty. *L'Harmonie des sphères: Encyclopédie d'astronomie et de musique extraite du commentaire sur "Les Echecs amoureux"*. Ed. Reginald Hyatte and Maryse Ponchard-Hyatte. Studies in the Humanities 1. New York: P. Lang, 1985.
- . *Le livre des Eschez amoureux moralisés*. Ed. Françoise Guichard-Tesson and Bruno Roy. Bibliothèque du moyen français 2. Montreal: Editions CERES, 1993.
- Four English Political Tracts of the Later Middle Ages*. Ed. Jean-Philippe Genet. London: Royal Historical Society, 1977.
- Galilei, Galileo. *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*. Trans. Stillman Drake. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957.
- Jean Gerson, *Opus tripartitum: Tractatus de pomo et morte Aristotelis; cui accedit Gersonii opusculum de Arte moriendi*. Antwerp: Matthias van der Goes, 1487.
- Gossuin de Metz. *L'image du monde de Maître Gossouin: Rédaction en prose*. Ed. O. H. Prior. Paris: Payot, 1913.
- Gower, John. *Confessio Amantis*. In *The English Works of John Gower*, ed. G. C. Macauley. EETS ES 81, 82. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1889.
- Gregory the Great. *Expositio in Canticum canticorum*. Ed. P. Verbraken. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 144. Turnhout: Brepols, 1963.
- Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. *Le Roman de la Rose*. Ed. Félix Lecoy. 3 vols. Paris: H. Champion, 1965.
- . *The Romance of the Rose*. Trans. Charles Dahlberg. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971.
- Harvey, Gabriel. *Gabriel Harvey's Marginalia*. Ed. G. C. Moore Smith. Stratford-upon-Avon: Shakespeare Head Press, 1913.
- Higden, Ranulf. *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis; Together with the English Translations of John Trevisa and of an Unknown Writer of the Fifteenth Century*. Ed. C. Babington and J. R. Lumby. 8 vols. Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores 41. London: Longman, 1865.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*. 11 vols. Ed. William Molesworth. London: J. Bohn, 1839–45.
- Honorius Augustodunensis. *Imago mundi*. Ed. Valerie I. J. Flint. Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge 49. Paris: Vrin, 1982.
- Hugh of St. Victor. *De tribus diebus*. Ed. D. Poirel. CCCM 177. Turnhout: Brepols, 2002.
- . *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith (De Sacramentis)*. Trans. Roy J. Deferrari. Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1951.
- Isidore of Seville. *Etymologiarum sive originum*. Ed. W. N. Lindsay. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911.
- . *The "Etymologies" of Isidore of Seville*. Trans. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Langland, William. *Piers Plowman: A New Annotated Edition of the C-Text*. Ed. Derek

- Pearsall, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008.
- Love, Nicholas. *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ: A Reading Text*. Ed. Michael G. Sargent. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2004.
- Luther, Martin. *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*. Ed. Timothy F. Lull. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989.
- Lydgate, John. *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*. Ed. Frederick J. Furnivall and Katharine B. Locock. EETS ES 77, 83, and 92. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1899.
- . *Reson and Sensuallite*. Ed. Ernst Sieper. 2 vols. EETS ES 84, 89. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1901.
- Macrobius. *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis*. Ed. J. Willis. Leipzig: Teubner, 1970.
- . *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*. Trans. William Harris Stahl. New York: Columbia University Press, 1952.
- Mandeville, John. *The Defective Version of Mandeville's Travels*. Ed. M. C. Seymour. EETS 319. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- . *Mandeville's Travels*. Ed. M. C. Seymour. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.
- The Middle English Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy: A Parallel-Text Edition*. Ed. Carrie Griffin. Heidelberg: Winter, 2013.
- Neckam, Alexander. *De naturis rerum libri duo*. Ed. Thomas Wright. Rolls Series 34. London: Longman, 1863.
- Pecock, Reginald. *Reginald Pecock's Book of Faith: A Fifteenth Century Theological Tractate*. Ed. J. L. Morison. Glasgow: J. Maclehose and Sons, 1909.
- . *The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*. Ed. Churchill Babington. 2 vols. Rolls Series 19. London: Longman, 1860.
- Peckham, John. *Registrum Epistolarum Fratris Johannis Peckham, Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis*. Ed. Charles Trice Martin. 3 vols. Rolls Series 77. London: Longman, Trübner, et al., 1882–85.
- Petrus Peregrinus [Pierre de Maricourt]. *Epistola de magnete [The Letter of Petrus Peregrinus on the Magnet]*. Ed. and trans. Br. Arnold. New York: McGraw, 1904.
- De pomo*. See Pseudo-Aristotle.
- Popular Treatises on Science Written During the Middle Ages*. Ed. Thomas Wright. London: Taylor, 1841.
- Pseudo-Aristotle. *The Apple or Aristotle's Death*. Trans. Mary F. Rousseau. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1968.
- . [*De pomo*.] In *Il canto di Manfredi e il Liber de pomo sive de morte Aristotilis*. Ed. Bruno Nardi and Paolo Mazzantini. Turin: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1964.
- . [*Secretum secretorum*.] *Lydgate and Burgh's Secrees of Old Philisoffres*. Ed. Robert Steele. EETS ES 66. London: Paul, 1894.
- . *Secretum Secretorum: Nine English Versions*. Ed. Mahmoud Manzalaoui. EETS 276. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- . *Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum*. Vol. 1, *Text and Glossary*. Ed. Robert Steele. EETS ES 124. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1898.
- Quintilian. *Institutio Oratorio*. Ed. H. E. Butler. 4 vols. Loeb Classical Library 124–27. Cambridge: W. Heinemann, 1958.
- Rolle, Richard. *The Pricke of Conscience (Stimulus Conscientiae): A Northumbrian Poem*. Ed. Richard Morris. Berlin: Philological Society, 1863.
- Seneca. *On the Shortness of Life*. Trans. John W. Basore. Loeb Classical Library. London: W. Heinemann, 1932.
- Sidney, Philip. *Sir Philip Sidney's Defense of Poesy*. Ed. Lewis Soens. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970.
- The South English Legendary*. Ed. Charlotte D'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill. 3 vols. EETS 235, 236, 244. London: Oxford University Press, 1956–59.
- Thomas Aquinas. *A Commentary on Aristotle's "De anima"*. Ed. Robert Pasnau. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999.

- . *Compendium of Theology*. Ed. Richard J. Regan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- . [Compendium Theologiae]. Vol. 27 of *Opera Omnia*. Ed. S. E. Fretté and P. Maré. 32 vols. Paris: L. Vives, 1875.
- . *In octo libros De Physico auditu sive Physicorum Aristotelis commentaria*. Ed. A. M. Pirotta. Naples: D'Auria, 1953.
- . *Summa contra gentiles* [*Liber de veritate catholicae fidei contra errores infidelium seu Summa contra gentiles*]. Ed. C. Pera, P. Marc, and P. Carmello. 3 vols. Rome: Marietti, 1961–67.
- . *Summa contra gentiles*. Trans. Anton C. Pegis, James F. Anderson, Vernon J. Bourke, and C. J. O'Neil. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975.
- . *Summa theologiae*. In *Opera omnia*, ed. Leonine Commission. Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1894.
- . *Summa theologica*. Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1947.
- Trevisa, John. *The Governance of Kings and Princes: John Trevisa's Middle English Translation of the "De regimine principum" of Aegidius Romanus*. Ed. D. C. Fowler, C. F. Briggs, and P. Remley. New York: Garland, 1997.
- . *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum*. Ed. M. C. Seymour et al. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.
- Twenty-Six Political and Other Poems ... from the Oxford Mss. Digby 102 and Douce 322*. Ed. J. Kail. EETS OS 124. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1904.
- Usk, Thomas. *Testament of Love: A Critical Edition*. Ed. Gary W. Shawver. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- . *The Testament of Love*. In *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, 7: xviii–xxxi, 1–145, 451–84. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897.
- William of Conches. *A Dialogue on Natural Philosophy (Dragmaticon Philosophiae)*. Trans. Italo Ronca and Matthew Curr. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997.
- William of St. Thierry. "De erroribus Guillelmi de Conchis ad Sanctum Bernardum." PL 180: 333–40.
- Wyclif, John. *The English Works of Wyclif*. Ed. F. D. Matthew. EETS OS 74. London: Kegan Paul, Trübner, 1880.
- . *Opera minora*. Ed. Johann Loserth and F. D. Matthew. Wyclif's Latin Works 9. New York: Johnson Reprint, 1966.
- . *Select English Works of John Wyclif*. Ed. Thomas Arnold. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869.

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Acampora-Michel, Elsbeth, ed. *Buch vom Apfel [Liber de pomo]*. Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2001.
- Adams, Jenny. *Power Play: The Literature and Politics of Chess in the Late Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.
- Adams, Marilyn McCord. "Aristotle and the Sacrament of the Altar: A Crisis in Medieval Aristotelianism." In *Aristotle and His Medieval Interpreters*, ed. Richard Bosley and Martin M. Tweedale, 195–249. Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Supplementary Volume 17. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1992.
- . "Ockham on Will, Nature, and Morality." In *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham*, ed. Paul Vincent Spade, 245–72. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- . *Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist: Thomas Aquinas, Giles of Rome, Duns Scotus, and William Ockham*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Aers, David. "The Parliament of Fowls: Authority, the Knower and the Known." *Chaucer Review* 16, no. 1 (1981): 1–17.
- Aertsen, Jan A., Kent Emery, and Andreas Speer, eds. *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277:*

- Philosophie und Theologie an der Universität von Paris im letzten Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts*. Miscellanea Mediaevalia 28. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001.
- Ait-Touati, Frédérique. *Fictions of the Cosmos: Science and Literature in the Seventeenth Century*. Trans. Susan Emanuel. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Akbari, Suzanne Conklin. *Seeing Through the Veil: Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004.
- Akbari, Suzanne Conklin, and Amilcare Iannucci, eds. *Marco Polo and the Encounter of East and West*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.
- Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Allen, Judson Boyce. *The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982.
- Armstrong, Adrian, and Sarah Kay. *Knowing Poetry: Verse in Medieval France from the "Rose" to the "Rhétoriciens"*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011.
- Aston, Margaret. *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion*. London: Hambledon Press, 1984.
- Badel, Pierre-Yves. *Le Roman de la Rose au XIVe siècle: Étude de la réception de l'oeuvre*. Geneva: Droz, 1980.
- Baird, Joseph L., and John Robert Kane, eds. *La Querelle de la Rose: Letters and Documents*. North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, no. 199. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Department of Romance Languages; distributed by the University of North Carolina Press, 1978.
- Baker, Denise. "Chaucer and Moral Philosophy: The Virtuous Women of *The Canterbury Tales*." *Medium Aevum* 60 (1991): 241–56.
- . "The Priesthood of Genius: A Study of the Medieval Tradition." *Speculum* 51, no. 2 (1976): 277–91.
- Bakker, Paul J. J. M. "La raison et le miracle: Les doctrines eucharistiques (c.1250–c.1400)." Ph.D. diss., Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, 1999.
- . "Réalisme et remanence: La doctrine eucharistique de Jean Wyclif." In *John Wyclif: Logica, Politica, Teologia*, ed. M.-T. Fumagalli Beonio Brocchieri and Stefano Simonetta, 87–112. Florence: SISMEL, 2003.
- Barratt, Alexandra. "Spiritual Writings and Religious Instruction." In *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 2, 1100–1400, ed. Nigel J. Morgan and Rodney M. Thomson, 340–66. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Baxter, Ron. "Learning from Nature: Lessons in Virtue and Vice in the Physiologus and Bestiaries." In *Virtue and Vice: The Personifications in the Index of Christian Art*, ed. Colum Hourihane, 29–41. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Beckwith, Sarah. *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture, and Society in Late Medieval Writings*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Bennett, J. A. W. *The Parlement of Foules: An Interpretation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957.
- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Best, Stephen, and Sharon Marcus. "Surface Reading: An Introduction." *Representations* 108, no. 1 (2009): 1–21.
- Bianchi, Luca. *Censure et liberté intellectuelle à l'Université de Paris: XIIIe–XIVe siècles*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1999.
- . *Studi sull'Aristotelismo del Rinascimento*. Subsidia Mediaevalia Patavina 5. Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2003.
- Bianchi, Luca, and Eugenio Randi, eds. *Le verità dissonanti: Aristotele alla fine del Medioevo*. Rome: Laterza, 1990.
- Binkley, Peter, ed. *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress*. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- Blamires, Alcuin. *Chaucer, Ethics, and Gender*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

- Bloch, R. Howard. "Medieval Misogyny." In *Misogyny, Misandry, and Misanthropy*, ed. R. Howard Bloch and Frances Ferguson, 1–24. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
- Bloomfield, Morton W. "A Grammatical Approach to Personification Allegory." *Modern Philology* 60, no. 3 (1963): 161–71.
- Blumenberg, Hans. *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981.
- . "'Nachahmung der Natur': Zur Vorgeschichte der Idee des schöpferischen Menschen." First published in 1957. Trans. Anna Wertz. "'Imitation of Nature': Toward a Prehistory of the Idea of Creative Being." *Qui Parle* 12, no. 1 (2000): 17–54.
- Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Renate. "Jean Gerson and the Debate on the *Romance of the Rose*." In *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, ed. Brian Patrick McGuire, 317–56. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Borlik, Todd A. *Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature: Green Pastures*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Boucher, Caroline, and Jean-Pascal Pouzet. "La matière des *Échecs amoureux*, d'Évrart de Conty à *Reson and Sensuallyte*." In *Lost in Translation?*, ed. Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead, 157–72. *Medieval Translator* 12. Turnhout: Brepols, 2009.
- Bowerbank, Sylvia. *Speaking for Nature: Women and Ecologies of Early Modern England*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.
- Boyde, Patrick. *Dante, Philomythes and Philosopher: Man in the Cosmos*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Brady, Ignatius. "Background to the Condemnation of 1270: Master William of Baglione, O.F.M." *Franciscan Studies* 30, no. 1 (1970): 5–48.
- Braidotti, Rosi. "Animals, Anomalies, and Inorganic Others." *PMLA* 124, no. 2 (2009): 526–32.
- . *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006.
- Breen, Katharine. *Imagining an English Reading Public, 1150–1400*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Brewer, Derek, ed. *Chaucer: The Critical Heritage*. 2 vols. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.
- Briggs, Charles F. *Giles of Rome's "De regimine principum": Reading and Writing Politics at Court and University, c. 1275–c. 1525*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Broadie, Sarah. *Nature and Divinity in Plato's "Timaeus"*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Brown, Peter. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Brownlee, Kevin. "Allegory in the *Roman de la Rose*." In *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, ed. Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck, 119–27. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- . "Jean de Meun and the Limits of Romance: Genius as Rewriter of Guillaume de Lorris." In *Romance: Generic Transformation from Chrétien de Troyes to Cervantes*, ed. Kevin Brownlee and Marina Scordilis Brownlee, 114–34. Hanover, VT: University Press of New England, 1985.
- . "Pygmalion, Mimesis, and the Multiple Endings of the *Roman de la Rose*." *Yale French Studies* no. 95 (1999): 193–211.
- Bulger, Thomas. "Platonism in Spenser's *Mutability Cantos*." In *Platonism and the English Imagination*, ed. Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton, 126–38. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Burger, Glenn. "Doing What Comes Naturally: The *Physician's Tale* and the Pardoner." In *Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the "Canterbury Tales" and "Troilus and Criseyde"*, ed. Peter G. Beidler, 117–30. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1998.
- Burnley, J. D. *Chaucer's Language and the Philosophers' Tradition*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1979.
- Burns, William E. "'A Proverb of Versatile Mutability': Proteus and Natural Knowledge in Early Modern Britain." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 32, no. 4 (2001): 969–80.

- Burr, David. *Eucharistic Presence and Conversion in Late Thirteenth-Century Franciscan Thought*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1984.
- Bynum, Caroline Walker. *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.
- Bynum, William F. "The Great Chain of Being After Forty Years: An Appraisal." *History of Science* 13 (1975): 1–28.
- Cadden, Joan. "Trouble in the Earthly Paradise: The Regime of Nature in Late Medieval Christian Culture." In *The Moral Authority of Nature*, ed. Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal, 207–31. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Camille, Michael. *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- . "The Iconoclast's Desire: Deguileville's Idolatry in France and England." In *Images, Idolatry, and Iconoclasm in Late Medieval England: Textuality and the Visual Image*, ed. Jeremy Dimmick, James Simpson, and Nicolette Zeeman, 152–71. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- . "The Illustrated Manuscripts of Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pèlerinages*, 1330–1426." Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, 1985.
- . "Illustrations in Harley MS 3487 and the Perception of Aristotle's *Libri naturales* in Thirteenth-Century England." In *England in the Thirteenth Century*, ed. W. M. Ormrod, 31–44. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1986.
- . "Reading the Printed Image: Illuminations and Woodcuts of the *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* in the Fifteenth Century." In *Printing the Written Word: The Social History of Books, Circa 1450–1520*, ed. Sandra Hindman, 251–91. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- Cassagnes-Brouquet, Sophie. *L'image du monde: Un trésor enluminé de la bibliothèque municipale de Rennes*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2003.
- A Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*. 5 vols. Munich: Hildesheim, 1980.
- Catto, J. I. "After Arundel: The Closing or the Opening of the English Mind?" In *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh, 43–54. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011.
- . "Theology After Wycliffism." In *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 2, *Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. J. I. Catto and T. A. R. Evans, 263–80. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- . "Wyclif and the Cult of the Eucharist." In *The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley*, ed. Katherine Walsh and Diana Wood, 269–86. Studies in Church History, Subsidia 4. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985.
- . "Wyclif and Wycliffism at Oxford, 1356–1430." In *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 2, *Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. J. I. Catto and Ralph Evans, 175–261. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Chance, Jane. *The Mythographic Chaucer: The Fabulation of Sexual Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995.
- Chenu, M.-D. *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*. Ed. and trans. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.
- . "La notion d'involucrum: Le mythe selon les théologiens médiévaux." *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 22 (1955): 75–79.
- . *La théologie au douzième siècle*. 2nd ed. Études de philosophie médiévale 45. Paris: J. Vrin, 1966.
- Chroust, Anton-Hermann. "A Contribution to the Medieval Discussion: Utrum Aristoteles Sit Salvatus." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 6, no. 2 (1945): 231–38.
- Code, Lorraine. *Ecological Thinking: The Politics of Epistemic Location*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Cohen, Gustave, ed. *Mystères et moralités du manuscrit 617 de Chantilly*. Bibliothèque du

- quinzième siècle 25. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1975.
- Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- . “Inventing with Animals.” In *Engaging with Nature: Essays on the Natural World in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt and Lisa J. Kiser, 39–62. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008.
- . *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.
- Cole, Andrew, and D. Vance Smith, eds. *The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages: On the Unwritten History of Theory*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Collette, Carolyn. *Species, Phantasms, and Images: Vision and Medieval Psychology in “The Canterbury Tales.”* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001.
- Collingwood, R. G. *The Idea of Nature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945.
- Condren, Conal, Stephen Gaukroger, and Ian Hunter, eds. *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe: The Nature of a Contested Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Connochie-Bourgne, Chantal. “*L’Image du monde*, une encyclopédie du XIII^e siècle édition critique et commentaire de la première version.” Ph.D. diss., Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne, 1999.
- . “‘Nature’ et ‘clergie’ dans l’oeuvre de vulgarisation scientifique de Gossuin de Metz (*Image du monde*, 1245).” In *Comprendre et maîtriser la nature au Moyen Âge: Mélanges d’histoire des sciences offerts à Guy Beaujouan*, 19–27. Geneva: Champion, 1994.
- Connolly, Margaret. *John Shirley: Book Production and the Noble Household in Fifteenth-Century England*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998.
- Cook, M. “How Francis Thynne Read His Chaucer.” *Journal of the Early Book Society* 15 (2012): 215–43.
- Cooper, Lisa H. “‘Markys ... off the Workman’: Heresy, Hagiography, and the Heavens in *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*.” In *Lydgate Matters: Poetry and Material Culture in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown, 89–111. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Cooper, Lisa H., and Andrea Denny-Brown, eds. *Lydgate Matters: Poetry and Material Culture in the Fifteenth Century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Copeland, Rita. *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages: Lollardy and Ideas of Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- . *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Copeland, Rita, and Ineke Sluiter, eds. *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300–1475*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Copeland, Rita, and Peter T. Struck, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Cornish, Alison. “Vulgarizing Science: Vernacular Translation of Natural Philosophy.” In *Dante for the New Millennium*, ed. Teodolinda Barolini and Wayne Storey, 169–82. New York: Fordham University Press, 2003.
- Courtenay, William J. “*Antiqui and Moderni* in Late Medieval Thought.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48, no. 1 (1987): 3–10.
- . *Capacity and Volition: A History of the Distinction of Absolute and Ordained Power*. Bergamo: P. Lubrina, 1990.
- . *Covenant and Causality in Medieval Thought: Studies in Philosophy, Theology, and Economic Practice*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1984.
- . “The Dialectic of Divine Omnipotence in the Age of Chaucer: A Reconsideration.” In *Nominalism and Literary Discourse: New Perspectives*, ed. Hugo Keiper, Christoph Bode, and Richard J. Utz, 111–21. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997.
- . “The Dialectic of Omnipotence in the High and Late Middle Ages.” In *Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence in Medieval Philosophy: Islamic, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives*, ed. Tamar Rudavsky, 243–69. Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1985.

- . *Occham and Occhamism: Studies in the Dissemination and Impact of His Thought*. Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 99. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- . *Schools and Scholars in Fourteenth-Century England*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- . "The University of Paris at the Time of Jean Buridan and Nicole Oresme." *Vivarium* 42, no. 1 (2004): 3–17.
- Craig, William Lane. *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez*. New York: E. J. Brill, 1988.
- Crane, Mary Thomas. *Losing Touch with Nature: Literature and the New Science in Sixteenth-Century England*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014.
- Crane, Susan. "For the Birds." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 29 (2007): 23–41.
- Cranz, Ferdinand. *A Bibliography of Aristotle Editions, 1501–1600*. Bibliotheca bibliographica Aureliana 38. Baden-Baden: V. Koerner, 1971.
- Crombie, A. C. *Medieval and Early Modern Science*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967.
- . *Robert Grosseteste and the Origins of Experimental Science, 1100–1700*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.
- Cronon, William. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1991.
- . "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." *Environmental History* 1, no. 1 (1996): 7–28.
- Cummins, Juliet, and David Burchell, eds. *Science, Literature, and Rhetoric in Early Modern England*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.
- Cunningham, Sean B. "Natural Inclination in Aquinas." Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 2013.
- Curry, Walter Clyde. *Chaucer and the Mediaeval Sciences*. Rev. ed. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1960.
- Curtius, Ernst Robert. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. Bollingen Series 36. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953.
- Daston, Lorraine, and Fernando Vidal, eds. *The Moral Authority of Nature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Davis, Rebecca. "Fugitive Poetics in Chaucer's *House of Fame*." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 37 (2015): 101–32.
- Dear, Peter. *The Intelligibility of Nature: How Science Makes Sense of the World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- , ed. *The Literary Structure of Scientific Argument: Historical Studies*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.
- . "Narratives, Anecdotes, and Experiments: Turning Experience into Science in the Seventeenth Century." In *The Literary Structure of Scientific Argument: Historical Studies*, ed. Peter Dear, 135–63. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.
- DeLanda, Manuel. *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*. London: Continuum, 2002.
- Delany, Sheila. *Chaucer's "House of Fame": The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.
- . *The Naked Text: Chaucer's Legend of Good Women*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- De Leemans, Pieter, and Michèle Goyens, eds. *Aristotle's "Problemata" in Different Times and Tongues*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Trans. Marie-Louise Mallet. Perspectives in Continental Philosophy. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008.
- . *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

- . *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*. Trans. D. B. Allison. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973.
- . *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- Di Gangi, Christina. "Lydgate's 'Mesure': The 'Echecs Amoureux' Tradition and the Theme of the 'Fall of Princes.'" Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2007.
- Dod, Bernard G. "Aristoteles Latinus." In *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, Jan Pinborg, and Eleonore Stump, 45–79. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- Dolnikowski, Edith Wilks. *Thomas Bradwardine: A View of Time and a Vision of Eternity in Fourteenth-Century Thought*. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- Dor, Juliette. "L'ABC de Chaucer: Traduction et transformation." In *Guillaume de Digulleville: Les Pèlerinages allégoriques*, ed. Frédéric Duval and Fabienne Pomel, 401–23. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008.
- Douie, Decima. *Archbishop Pecham*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952.
- Dragonetti, Roger. "Pygmalion ou les pièges de la fiction dans le *Roman de la Rose*." In *Orbis mediaevalis: Mélanges de langue et de littérature médiévales offerts à Reto Raduolf Bezzola à l'occasion de son quatre-vingtième anniversaire*, ed. Reto R. Bezzola, Georges Güntert, Marc René Jung, and Kurt Ringger, 89–111. Berne: Francke, 1978.
- Dronke, Peter. "Bernard Silvestris, Natura, and Personification." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980): 16–31.
- Duba, William O. "Continental Franciscan *Quodlibeta* After Scotus." In *Theological Quodlibeta in the Middle Ages: The Fourteenth Century*, ed. Christopher Schabel, 569–649. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Duhem, Pierre M. M. *Études sur Léonard de Vinci*. 3 vols. Paris: F. de Nobele, 1955.
- Duncan, Edgar H. "The Literature of Alchemy and Chaucer's *Canon's Yeoman's Tale*: Framework, Theme, and Characters." *Speculum* 43, no. 4 (1968): 633–56.
- Düring, Ingemar. *Aristotle in the Ancient Biographical Tradition*. *Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia* 5. Göteborg: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1957.
- Duval, Frédéric, and Fabienne Pomel, eds. *Guillaume de Digulleville: Les Pèlerinages allégoriques*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008.
- Eade, J. C. "'We Ben to Lewed or to Slowe': Chaucer's Astronomy and Audience Participation." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 4 (1982): 76–82.
- Eamon, William. *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Eberle, Patricia J. "The Lovers' Glass: Nature's Discourse on Optics and the Optical Design of the *Romance of the Rose*." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (1977): 241–62.
- Economou, George. *The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972.
- Edwards, A. S. G. "John Stow and Middle English Literature." In *John Stow (1525–1605) and the Making of the English Past*, ed. Ian Gadd and Alexandra Gillespie, 109–18. *Studies in Early Modern Culture and the History of the Book*. London: British Library, 2004.
- Ehrle, Franz. *John Peckham über den Kampf des Augustinismus und Aristotelismus in der zweiten Hälfte des 13. Jhs*. Innsbruck, 1889.
- Faral, Edmond. "Guillaume de Digulleville, moine de Châalis." In *Histoire littéraire de la France*, 39:1–132. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1962.
- Fasseur, Valérie. "Des propriétés des choses selon Jean de Meun." In *En un vergier ... : Mélanges offerts à Marie-Françoise Notz*, ed. Joëlle Ducos and Guy Latry, 287–98. Pessac: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2009.
- Findlen, Paula. "Empty Signs? Reading the Book of Nature in Renaissance Science." *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 21, no. 3 (1990): 511–18.
- . "Francis Bacon and the Reform of Natural History in the Seventeenth Century." In *History and the Disciplines: The Reclassification of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Donald R. Kelley, 239–60. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1995.

- Fisher, John H. *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer*. New York: New York University Press, 1964.
- Flasch, Kurt. *Aufklärung im Mittelalter? Die Verurteilung von 1277. Das Dokument des Bischofs von Paris*. Mainz: Dieterich, 1989.
- Fleming, John V. "The Moral Reputation of the *Roman de la Rose* Before 1400." *Romance Philology* 18 (1965): 430–35.
- . *The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969.
- Fletcher, Angus. "Living Magnets, Paracelsian Corpses, and the Psychology of Grace in Donne's Religious Verse." *ELH* 72, no. 1 (2005): 1–22.
- Fletcher, J. M. "Developments in the Faculty of Arts, 1370–1520." In *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 2, *Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. J. I. Catto and Ralph Evans, 315–45. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- "Focus: Getting Back to *The Death of Nature*: Rereading Carolyn Merchant." Special section, *Isis* 97, no. 3 (2006): 485–533.
- Frank, Robert Worth, Jr. "Structure and Meaning in the *Parlement of Foules*." *PMLA* 71, no. 3 (1956): 530–39.
- Franklin-Brown, Mary. *Reading the World: Encyclopedic Writing in the Scholastic Age*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.
- Freddoso, Alfred J. "Ockham on Faith and Reason." In *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham*, ed. Paul Vincent Spade, 326–49. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Funkenstein, Amos. *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986.
- Gabrovsky, Alexander N. *Chaucer the Alchemist: Physics, Mutability, and the Medieval Imagination*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Galloway, Andrew. "John Lydgate and the Origins of Vernacular Humanism." *JEGP* 107 (2008): 445–71.
- Galpin, Stanley L. "*Les Eschez Amoureux*: A Complete Synopsis, with Unpublished Extracts." *Romanic Review* 11, no. 4 (1920): 283–307.
- Gamper, Rudolf. *Katalog der mittelalterlichen Handschriften der Ministerialbibliothek Schaffhausen*. Dietikon, Zurich: Urs Graf, 1994.
- Gaukroger, Stephen. *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture: Science and the Shaping of Modernity, 1210–1685*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006.
- Gelber, Hester Goodenough. *It Could Have Been Otherwise: Contingency and Necessity in Dominican Theology at Oxford, 1300–1350*. Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 81. Leiden: Brill, 2004.
- . "Laughter and Deception: Holcot and Chaucer Remain Cheerful." In *Uncertain Knowledge: Scepticism, Relativism, and Doubt in the Middle Ages*, ed. Dallas G. Denery II, Kantik Ghosh, and Nicolette Zeeman, 285–304. Turnhout: Brepols, 2014.
- . "Providence." In *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Robert Pasnau, 2:761–72. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Gellrich, Jesse M. *The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages: Language Theory, Mythology, and Fiction*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Ghosh, Kantik. "Bishop Reginald Pecock and the Idea of 'Lollardy.'" In *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson*, ed. Helen Barr and Ann M. Hutchison, 251–65. Turnhout: Brepols, 2005.
- . "University-Learning, Theological Method, and Heresy in Fifteenth-Century England." In *Religious Controversy in Europe, 1378–1536: Textual Transmission and Networks of Readership*, ed. Michael Van Dussen and Pavel Soukup, 289–313. *Medieval Church Studies* 27. Turnhout: Brepols, 2013.
- . *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the Interpretation of Texts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Gill, Mary Louise. *Aristotle on Substance: The Paradox of Unity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton

- University Press, 1989.
- Gilson, Étienne. *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. New York: Random House, 1955.
- . *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages*. New York: Scribner, 1938.
- . *Thomism: The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*. Trans. Armand A. Maurer. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2002.
- Glacken, Clarence J. *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.
- Goddu, André. "Ockham's Philosophy of Nature." In *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham*, ed. Paul Vincent Spade, 143–67. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Grabmann, Martin. *I divieti ecclesiastici di Aristotle sotto Innocenzo III e Gregorio IX*. Rome: Saler, 1941.
- . *Methoden und Hilfsmittel des Aristotelesstudiums im Mittelalter*. Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1939.
- . *Mittelalterliches Gestelesleben: Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der Scholastik und Mystik*. 3 vols. Munich: Huebner, 1926–56; reprint, Hildesheim: Olms, 1984.
- Grady, Frank. *Representing Righteous Heathens in Late Medieval England*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Grafton, Anthony. "The History of Ideas: Precept and Practice, 1950–2000 and Beyond." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 1 (2006): 1–32.
- Grant, Edward. "The Effect of the Condemnation of 1277." In *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, Jan Pinborg, and Eleonore Stump, 537–39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- . *God and Reason in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- . *A History of Natural Philosophy: From the Ancient World to the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- . "Medieval Natural Philosophy: Empiricism Without Observation." In *The Dynamics of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Cornelis Leijenhorst, 141–68. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- . *Much Ado About Nothing: Theories of Space and Vacuum from the Middle Ages to the Scientific Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- . "Place and Space in Medieval Physical Thought." In *Motion and Time, Space and Matter: Interrelations in the History of Philosophy and Science*, ed. Peter K. Machamer and Robert G. Turnbull, 137–67. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976.
- . "Science and Theology in the Middle Ages." In *The Nature of Natural Philosophy in the Later Middle Ages*, 225–52. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010.
- . *A Source Book in Medieval Science*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974.
- Grant, Iain Hamilton. *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling*. London: Continuum, 2006.
- Green, Richard Firth. "Lydgate and Deguileville Once More." *Notes and Queries*, n.s., 25 (1978): 105–6.
- Grennen, Joseph E. "Science and Poetry in Chaucer's *House of Fame*." *Annuaire Mediaevale* 8 (1967): 38–45.
- Gunn, Alan M. F. *The Mirror of Love: A Reinterpretation of "The Romance of the Rose"*. Lubbock: Texas Tech Press, 1952.
- Gynn, Noah D. *Allegory and Sexual Ethics in the High Middle Ages*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Hackett, Jeremiah. "Roger Bacon and the Reception of Aristotle in the Thirteenth Century: An Introduction to His Criticism of Aristotle." In *Albertus Magnus und die Anfänge der Aristoteles-Rezeption im lateinischen Mittelalter: Von Richardus Rufus bis zu Franciscus de Mayronis*, ed. Ludger Honnefelder, Rega Wood, Mechthild Dreyer, and Marc-Aeilko Aris, 219–47. Subsidia Albertina 1. Munster: Aschendorff, 2005.
- Hadot, Pierre. *The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature*. Trans. Michael

- Chase. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Hagen, Susan K. *Allegorical Remembrance: A Study of "The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man" as a Medieval Treatise on Seeing and Remembering*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990.
- Hallmundsson, May. "Chaucer's Circle: Henry Scogan and His Friends." *Medievalia et Humanistica* 10 (1981): 129–39.
- Hamburger, Jeffrey F. "Rewriting History: The Visual and the Vernacular in Late Medieval History Bibles." In *Retextualisierung in der mittelalterlichen Literatur*, ed. Ursula Peters and Joachim Bumke, 259–307. Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2005.
- Hanna, Ralph. *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and Their Texts*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996.
- Hansen, Elaine Tuttle. *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Haraway, Donna. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Harbus, Antonina. "A Renaissance Reader's English Annotations to Thynne's 1532 Edition of Chaucer's Works." *Review of English Studies* 59, no. 240 (2008): 342–55.
- Harman, Graham. *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics*. Melbourne, Australia: Re.press, 2009.
- Harris, Jonathan Gil. *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.
- Harrison, Peter. "The Fashioned Image of Poetry or the Regular Instruction of Philosophy? Truth, Utility, and the Natural Sciences in Early Modern England." In *Science, Literature, and Rhetoric in Early Modern England*, ed. Juliet Cummins and David Burchell, 15–36. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.
- Harvey, Susan Ashbrook. *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.
- Havely, Nick. "Nature's Yerde and Ward: Authority and Choice in Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*." In *Medieval Poetics and Social Practice: Responding to the Work of Penn R. Szittyá*, ed. Seeta Chaganti, 109–23. New York: Fordham University Press, 2012.
- Hawkes, David, Richard Newhauser, and Nathaniel Bump, eds. *The Book of Nature and Humanity in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2013.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Heller-Roazen, Daniel. *Fortune's Faces: The "Roman de la Rose" and the Poetics of Contingency*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.
- Hicks, Eric, ed. *Le débat sur le "Roman de la Rose"*. Bibliothèque du XVe siècle 93. Paris: Champion, 1977.
- Higgins, Iain Macleod. *Writing East: The "Travels" of Sir John Mandeville*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.
- Hilder, Gisela. *Der scholastische Wortschatz bei Jean de Meun: Die "artes liberales"*. Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1972.
- Hiltner, Ken. *What Else Is Pastoral? Renaissance Literature and the Environment*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011.
- Hissette, Roland. *Enquête sur les 219 articles condamnés à Paris le 7 Mars 1277*. Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1977.
- Hobbins, Daniel. *Authorship and Publicity Before Print: Jean Gerson and the Transformation of Late Medieval Learning*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.
- Hodgson, David. "Quantum Physics, Consciousness, and Free Will." In *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane, 85–124. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Hödl, Ludwig. "Die Opposition des Johannes de Polliaco gegen die Schule der Gandavistae." *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 9 (2004): 115–47.
- . "The *Quodlibeta* of John of Pouilly († ca. 1328) and the Philosophical and Theological Debates at Paris, 1307–1312." In *Theological Quodlibeta in the Middle Ages: The Fourteenth*

- Century, ed. Christopher Schabel, 199–229. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Hoenen, Maarten J. F. M. “*Via Antiqua and Via Moderna in the Fifteenth Century: Doctrinal, Institutional, and Church Political Factors in the Wegestreit.*” In *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Metaphysics and Modal Theory, 1400–1700*, ed. Russell L. Friedman and Lauge O. Nielsen, 9–36. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2003.
- Hoenen, Maarten J. F. M., and Robert Wisnovsky. “Philosophy and Theology.” In *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, rev. ed., ed. Robert Pasnau, 689–706. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Hoffman, Paul. “Reasons, Causes, and Inclinations.” In *Emotion and Cognitive Life in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Martin Pickavé and Lisa Shapiro, 156–75. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Hoffman, Tobias. “Intellectualism and Voluntarism.” In *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Robert Pasnau, 1:414–27. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Horobin, Simon. *The Language of the Chaucer Tradition*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003.
- . “A New Fragment of the *Romaunt of the Rose*.” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 28 (2006): 205–15.
- Houghton, Josephine E. “The Works of Guillaume de Deguileville in Late Medieval England: Transmission, Reception and Context with Special Reference to *Piers Plowman*.” Ph.D. diss., University of Birmingham, 2007.
- Hudson, Anne. *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
- . ed. *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- Hudson, Anne, and Pamela Gradon, eds. *English Wycliffite Sermons*. 5 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983–96.
- Hult, David F., ed. *Debate of the Romance of the Rose*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- . *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First “Roman de la Rose.”* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Huot, Sylvia. “Bodily Peril: Sexuality and the Subversion of Order in Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose*.” *Modern Language Review* 95 (2000): 41–61.
- . *The “Romance of the Rose” and Its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Imbach, Ruedi. “Aristoteles in der Hölle: Eine anonyme *Questio* ‘Utrum Aristotiles sit salvatus’ im Cod. Vat. Lat. 1012 (127ra–127va) zum Jenseitsschicksal des Stagiriten.” In *Peregrina Curiositas: Eine Reise durch den orbis antiquus*, ed. Andreas Kessler, Thomas Ricklin, and Gregor Wurst, 297–318. Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag; and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1994.
- . “L’Averroïsme latin du XIII^e siècle.” In *Gli Studi di filosofia medievale fra Otto e Novecento: Contributo a un bilancio storiografico*, ed. Ruedi Imbach and Alfonso Maierù, 191–208. Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1991.
- Irvine, Martin. “Medieval Grammatical Theory and Chaucer’s *House of Fame*.” *Speculum* 60, no. 4 (October 1, 1985): 850–76.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Jardine, Lisa, and Anthony Grafton. “‘Studied for Action’: How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy.” *Past & Present* 129 (1990): 30–78.
- Jauss, Hans Robert. *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*. Trans. Timothy Bahti. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.
- . “La transformation de la forme allégorique entre 1180 et 1240: D’Alain de Lille à Guillaume de Lorris.” In *L’humanisme médiéval dans les littératures romanes du XII^e au XIV^e siècle*, ed. Anthime Fourier, 107–46. Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1964.
- Jeay, Madeleine. “Entre encyclopédie et récit: Dans la mouvance du *Roman de la Rose*, le

- Livre des Échecs amoureux* d'Évrart de Conty." *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 18 (2009): 253–61.
- Johansen, T. K. *Plato's Natural Philosophy: A Study of the Timaeus-Critias*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Johnson, Barbara. *Persons and Things*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- . *The Wake of Deconstruction*. Bucknell Lectures in Literary Theory 11. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.
- . *A World of Difference*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.
- Jones, Emma R. "The Nature of Place and the Place of Nature in Plato's *Timaeus* and Aristotle's *Physics*." *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (2012): 247–68.
- Jones, Peter Murray. "Information and Science." In *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England*, ed. Rosemary Horrox, 97–111. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Jordan, Mark. *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- Juel, Kristin E. "Loving the Creator and His Creations: Ethical Reflections on the Nature of Love in the Fourteenth-Century *Échecs amoureux*." Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2002.
- Kamath, Stephanie A. V. G. *Authorship and First-Person Allegory in Late Medieval France and England*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2012.
- . "Periphery and Purpose: The Fifteenth-Century Rubrication of the *Pilgrimage of Human Life*." *Glossator* 1 (2009): 31–46.
- . "Rewriting Ancient Auctores in the *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine*." In *Mittelalterliche Textualität als Retextualisierung: Das "Pèlerinage"—Corpus des Guillaume de Déguileville im europäischen Mittelalter*, ed. Andreas Kablitz and Ursula Peters. 321–42. Heidelberg: Karl Winter Verlag, 2013.
- Karnes, Michelle. *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Kay, Sarah. *The Place of Thought: The Complexity of One in Late Medieval French Didactic Poetry*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.
- . *The Romance of the Rose*. Critical Introductions to French Literature 110. London: Grant and
- Cutler, 1995. Keen, Elizabeth. *The Journey of a Book: Bartholomew the Englishman and the Properties of Things*. Canberra: ANU E Press, 2007.
- Keen, Maurice. "Wyclif, the Bible, and Transubstantiation." In *Wyclif in His Times*, ed. Anthony Kenny, 1–16. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.
- Keller, Evelyn Fox. *Making Sense of Life: Explaining Biological Development with Models, Metaphors, and Machines*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- . *Refiguring Life: Metaphors of Twentieth-Century Biology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.
- . *Reflections on Gender and Science*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985. Kelley, Donald R. "Intellectual History and Cultural History: The Inside and the Outside." *History of the Human Sciences* 15, no. 2 (2002): 1–19.
- Kenny, Anthony. "Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom." In *Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Anthony Kenny, 255–70. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1969.
- Kent, Bonnie. *Virtues of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Late Thirteenth Century*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995.
- King, Peter. "Mediaeval Thought-Experiments: The Metamethodology of Mediaeval Science." In *Thought Experiments in Science and Philosophy*, ed. Tamara Horowitz and Gerald J. Massey, 43–64. Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1991.
- Kiser, Lisa J. "Alain de Lille, Jean de Meun, and Chaucer: Ecofeminism and Some Medieval Lady Natures." In *Mediaevalitas: Reading the Middle Ages*, ed. Piero Boitani and Anna Torti, 1–14. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996.

- . *Truth and Textuality in Chaucer's Poetry*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1991.
- Klassen, Norman. *Chaucer on Love, Knowledge, and Sight*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995.
- Knowlton, E. C. "Nature in Earlier Italian." *Modern Language Notes* 36, no. 6 (1921): 329–34.
- . "Nature in Early German." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 24, no. 3 (1925): 409–12.
- . "Nature in Middle English." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 20, no. 2 (1921): 186–207.
- . "Nature in Old French." *Modern Philology* 20, no. 3 (1923): 309–29.
- . "Spenser and Nature." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 34, no. 3 (1935): 366–76.
- Korolec, J. B. "Free Will and Free Choice." In *Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, Jan Pinborg, and Eleonore Stump, 629–41. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- Kraft, Christine. *Die Liebesgarten-Allegorie der "Echecs amoureux": Kritische Ausgabe und Kommentar*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1977.
- Kratzmann, G. C. *Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations, 1430–1550*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Kraye, Jill. "The Printing History of Aristotle in the Fifteenth Century: A Bibliographical Approach to Renaissance Philosophy." *Renaissance Studies* 9, no. 2 (1995): 189–211.
- Kretzmann, Norman. "Philosophy of Mind." In *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump, 128–59. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Krier, Theresa M., ed. *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998.
- Kusukawa, Sachiko. *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy: The Case of Philip Melancthon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Lahey, Stephen E. *John Wyclif*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- . "Late Medieval Eucharistic Theology." In *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Middle Ages*, ed. Ian Christopher Levy, Gary Macy, and Kristen Van Ausdall, 499–539. Leiden: Brill, 2012.
- . *Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- . "Reginald Pecock on the Authority of Reason, Scripture and Tradition." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 56, no. 2 (2005): 235–60.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- Lang, Helen. *Aristotle's "Physics" and Its Medieval Varieties*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.
- Langlois, Charles-Victor. *La connaissance de la nature et du monde au moyen âge*. Paris: Hachette, 1911.
- Langlois, Ernest. *Les manuscrits du "Roman de la Rose": Description et classement*. Lille: Tallandier; Paris: H. Champion, 1910.
- Latour, Bruno. "An Attempt at a 'Compositionist Manifesto.'" *New Literary History* 41, no. 3 (2010): 471–90.
- . *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- . *We Have Never Been Modern*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Lawton, David. *Chaucer's Narrators*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985.
- Leclercq, Jean. *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1961.
- Leicester, Marshall H. *The Disenchanted Self: Representing the Subject in the "Canterbury*

- Tales." Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- Leff, Gordon. *William of Ockham: The Metamorphosis of Scholastic Discourse*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975.
- Legaré, Anne-Marie. "La réception du poème des *Eschés amoureux* et du *Livre des Eschez amoureux moralisés* dans les États bourguignons au XVe siècle." *Le Moyen Âge* 113, no. 3 (2007): 591–611.
- Leijenhorst, Cornelis Hendrik, Christoph Herbert Lüthy, and J. M. M. H. Thijssen, eds. *The Dynamics of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century*. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- Lewis, C. S. *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958.
- . *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964.
- Leyerle, John. "Chaucer's Windy Eagle." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 40 (1971): 247–65.
- Libera, Alain de. *Penser au Moyen Âge*. Paris: Seuil, 1996.
- Lindberg, David C. *Science in the Middle Ages*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O. *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936.
- . "Reflections on the History of Ideas." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1, no. 1 (1940): 3–23, Lowe, Elizabeth. *The Contested Theological Authority of Thomas Aquinas: The Controversies Between Hervaeus Natalis and Durandus of St. Pourçain*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Lucks, Henry A. "Natura Naturans–Natura Naturata." *New Scholasticism* 9, no. 1 (1935): 1–24.
- Lumiansky, R. M. "Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*: A Philosophical Interpretation." *Review of English Studies* 24, no. 94 (1948): 81–89.
- Lynch, Kathryn L. *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*. Chaucer Studies 27. Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2000.
- . "The *Parliament of Fowls* and Late Medieval Voluntarism: Part I." *Chaucer Review* 25, no. 1 (1990): 1–16.
- . "The *Parliament of Fowls* and Late Medieval Voluntarism: Part II." *Chaucer Review* 25, no. 2 (1990): 85–95.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. 2nd ed. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.
- Macy, Gary. *The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.
- Mahoney, Edward P. "Aristotle as 'The Worst Natural Philosopher' (*pessimus naturalis*) and 'The Worst Metaphysician' (*pessimus metaphysicus*): His Reputation Among Some Franciscan Philosophers (Bonaventure, Francis of Meyronnes, Antonius Andreas, and Joannes Canonicus) and Later Reactions." In *Die Philosophie im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert: In Memoriam Konstanty Michalski (1879–1947)*, ed. Olaf Pluta, 261–73. Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 1988.
- Maier, Anneliese. *On the Threshold of Exact Science*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982.
- . *Zwei Grundprobleme der scholastischen Naturphilosophie*. 2nd ed. Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1951.
- Mandelbaum, Maurice. "The History of Ideas, Intellectual History, and the History of Philosophy." *History and Theory* 5 (1965): 33–66.
- Mandonnet, Pierre, ed. *Siger de Brabant et l'averroïsme latin au XIII^e siècle: Étude critique et documents inédits*. 2 vols. Fribourg: Librairie de l'Université, 1899.
- Mann, Jill. *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire: The Literature of Social Classes and the "General Prologue" to the "Canterbury Tales"*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973.

- . *From Aesop to Reynard: Beast Literature in Medieval Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Manzalaoui, M. A. "Chaucer and Science." In *Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. Derek Brewer, 224–61. London: G. Bell, 1974.
- Marenbon, John. *Pagans and Philosophers: The Problem of Paganism from Augustine to Leibniz*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Marrone, Steven P. "Aristotle, Augustine and the Identity of Philosophy in Late Thirteenth-Century Paris: The Case of Some Theologians." In *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277: Philosophie und Theologie an der Universität von Paris im letzten Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Jan A. Aertsen, Kent Emery, and Andreas Speer, 276–98. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001.
- . "Henry of Ghent in Mid-Career as Interpreter of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas." In *Henry of Ghent: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on the Occasion of the 700th Anniversary of His Death (1293)*, ed. W. Vanhamel, 193–209. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996.
- . *Truth and Scientific Knowledge in the Thought of Henry of Ghent*. Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1985.
- Martin, Craig. *Subverting Aristotle: Religion, History, and Philosophy in Early Modern Science*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014.
- Maupeu, Philippe. *Pèlerins de vie humaine: Autobiographie et allégorie narrative de Guillaume de Deguileville à Octovien de Saint-Gelais*. Paris: Champion, 2009.
- McColley, Diane. "The Commodious Ark: Nature's Voice in Early Modern Poetry." In *The Environmental Tradition in English Literature*, ed. John Parnham, 130–43. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002.
- McNamer, Sarah. *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.
- McWebb, Christine. "Heresy and Debate: Reading the *Roman de la Rose*." *Aevum: Rassegna di Scienze Storiche, Linguistiche, e Filologiche* 3 (2003): 545–56.
- McWebb, Christine, and Earl Jeffrey Richards, eds. *Debating the "Roman de la Rose": A Critical Anthology*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Meeker, Natania. *Voluptuous Philosophy: Literary Materialism in the French Enlightenment*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2006.
- Mercer, Christia. "The Vitality and Importance of Early Modern Aristotelianism." In *The Rise of Modern Philosophy: The Tension Between the New and Traditional Philosophies from Machiavelli to Leibniz*, ed. Tom Sorell, 33–67. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- Merchant, Carolyn. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980.
- Metlitzki, Dorothee. *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977.
- Mettlich, Joseph. *Die Schachpartie in der Prosabearbeitung der allegorisch-didaktischen Dichtung "Les Eschez Amoureux"*. Munster: Aschendorffschen buchdruckerei, 1907.
- Meyer, Susan Sauvé. "Self-Movement and External Causation." In *Self-Motion from Aristotle to Newton*, ed. Mary Louise Gill and James G. Lennox, 65–80. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Meyer-Lee, Robert. *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Michelet, Fabienne. "Reading and Writing the East in Mandeville's Travels." In *Wissen über Grenzen: Arabisches Wissen und lateinisches Mittelalter*, ed. Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener, 282–302. *Miscellanea mediaevalia* 33. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006.
- Middleton, Anne. "The Physician's Tale and Love's Martyrs: 'Ensamples Mo Than Ten' as a Method in the *Canterbury Tales*." *Chaucer Review* 8, no. 1 (1973): 9–32.
- Miller, Mark. *Philosophical Chaucer: Love, Sex, and Agency in the "Canterbury Tales"*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

- Minnis, A. J. *Magister Amoris: The "Roman de la Rose" and Vernacular Hermeneutics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- . *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*. London: Scholar Press, 1984.
- Modersohn, Mechthild. *Natura als Göttin im Mittelalter: Ikonographische Studien zu Darstellungen der personifizierten Natur*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997.
- Monfasani, John. "Aristotle as the Scribe of Nature: The Frontispiece of Vat. Lat. 2094 and the Plato-Aristotle Controversy of the Fifteenth Century." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 69 (2006): 193–205.
- . *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of His Rhetoric and Logic*. Leiden: Brill, 1976.
- Morton, Jonathan. "Ingenious Genius: Invention, Creation, Reproduction in the High Middle Ages." *L'Esprit Créateur* 55, no. 2 (2015): 4–19.
- Morton, Timothy. *The Ecological Thought*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- . "Ecologocentrism: Unworking Animals." *SubStance* 37, no. 3 (2008): 37–61.
- . "Ecology as Text, Text as Ecology." *Oxford Literary Review* 32, no. 1 (July 2010): 1–17.
- . *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- . "Queer Ecology." *PMLA* 125, no. 2 (2010): 273–82.
- Müller, Franz Walter. *Der Rosenroman und der lateinische Averroismus des 13. Jahrhunderts*. Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1947.
- Munro, Lucy. *Archaic Style in English Literature, 1590–1674*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Murdoch, John. "From Social into Intellectual Factors: An Aspect of the Unitary Character of Late Medieval Learning." In *The Cultural Context of Medieval Learning: Proceedings of the First International Colloquium on Philosophy, Science, and Theology in the Middle Ages*, ed. John Murdoch et al., 271–348. Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1975.
- Nauta, Lodi. "A Weak Chapter in the Book of Nature: Hans Blumenberg on Medieval Thought." In *The Book of Nature in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Arie Johan Vanderjagt and Klaas van Berkel, 135–50. Leuven: Peeters, 2005.
- Nederman, Cary J. "Nature, Ethics, and the Doctrine of 'Habitus': Aristotelian Moral Psychology in the Twelfth Century." *Traditio* 45 (1989): 87–110.
- Newman, Barbara. *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.
- Nievergelt, Marco. *Allegorical Quests from Deguileville to Spenser*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012.
- Nievergelt, Marco, and Stephanie A. Vierick Gibbs Kamath, eds. *The Pèlerinage Allegories of Guillaume de Deguileville: Tradition, Authority, and Influence*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013.
- Nitzsche, Jane Chance. *The Genius Figure in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975.
- Nolan, Maura. *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- North, John D. "1348 and All That: Oxford Science and the Black Death." In *From Ancient Omens to Statistical Mechanics: Essays on the Exact Sciences Presented to Asger Aaboe*, ed. J. L. Berggren and B. R. Goldstein. Copenhagen: University Library, 1987.
- . *Chaucer's Universe*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
- . "Comets, Necessity, and Nature." In *The Book of Nature in Early Modern and Modern History*, ed. Klaas van Berkel and Arjo Vanderjagt, 275–98. Leuven: Peeters, 2006.
- . "Natural Philosophy in Late Medieval Oxford." In *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 2, *Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. J. I. Catto and Ralph Evans, 65–102. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- . "Some Weak Links in the Great Chain of Being." In *Empirical Logic and Public Debate: Essays in Honour of Else M. Barth*, ed. Erik C. W. Krabbe, Renée José Dalitz, and Pier A.

- Smit, 105–20. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993.
- Oberman, Heiko A. “Via Antiqua and Via Moderna: Late Medieval Prolegomena to Early Reformation Thought.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48, no. 1 (1987): 23–40.
- Olson, Glending. “Geoffrey Chaucer.” In *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace, 566–88. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Ozment, Steven E. *The Age of Reform, 1250–1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980.
- Pai, Ashlynn K. “Varying Degrees of Light: Bonaventure and the Medieval Book of Nature.” In *The Book and the Magic of Reading in the Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen, 3–19. New York: Garland, 1999.
- Paré, Gérard. *Les idées et les lettres au XIIIe siècle: Le Roman de la Rose*. Montreal: Université de Montréal, 1947.
- Park, Katharine. “Nature in Person: Medieval and Renaissance Allegories and Emblems.” In *The Moral Authority of Nature*, ed. Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal, 50–73. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Parker, Patricia A. *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979.
- Pasnau, Robert. *Metaphysical Themes, 1274–1671*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- . *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa Theologiae 1a*, 75–89. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Passannante, Gerard. *The Lucretian Renaissance: Philology and the Afterlife of Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Paulmier-Foucart, Monique, S. Lusignan, and A. Nadeau, eds. *Vincent de Beauvais: Intentions et réceptions d’une oeuvre encyclopédique au Moyen Âge*. Paris: Vrin, 1990.
- Paxson, James J. *The Poetics of Personification*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Pearsall, Derek. *John Lydgate*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970.
- . *John Lydgate (1371–1449): A Bio-Bibliography*. Victoria, B.C.: University of Victoria, 1997.
- Pedersen, Olaf. *The Book of Nature*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992.
- Pelen, Marc M. “Murder and Immortality in Fragment VI (C) of the *Canterbury Tales*: Chaucer’s Transformation of Theme and Image from the *Roman de la Rose*.” *Chaucer Review* 29, no. 1 (1994): 1–25.
- Perler, Dominik. “Skepticism.” In *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Robert Pasnau, 1:384–96. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- , ed. *Transformations of the Soul: Aristotelian Psychology, 1250–1650*. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Phillips, Helen. “Chaucer and Deguileville: The ‘ABC’ in Context.” *Medium Aevum* 62, no. 1 (1993): 1–19.
- . “Chaucer’s French Translations.” *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 37, no. 1 (1993): 65–82.
- Piché, David, with Claude Lafleur, eds. *La condamnation parisienne de 1277: Nouvelle édition du texte latin, traduction, introduction et commentaire*. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1999.
- Pink, Thomas. “Freedom of the Will.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. John Marenbon, 569–87. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Plezia, Marianus. “Aristotelis qui ferebatur liber *De pomo*: Versio latina vetusta interprete Manfredo duce.” *Eos* 47 (1954): 191–217.
- Plumwood, Val. *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- . *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Poirel, Dominique. *Livre de la nature et débat trinitaire au XIIe siècle: Le “De tribus diebus” de Hugues de Saint-Victor*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2002.
- Poirion, Daniel. *Le moyen âge*, vol. 2, 1300–1480. Littérature française 1. Paris: Arthaud, 1971.
- . *Le Roman de la Rose*. Paris: Hatier, 1973.
- Polak, Lucie. “Plato, Nature and Jean de Meun.” *Reading Medieval Studies* 3 (1977): 80–103.

- Polzella, Marion L. "'The Craft So Long to Lerne': Poet and Lover in Chaucer's 'Envoy to Scogan' and *Parliament of Fowls*." *Chaucer Review* 10, no. 4 (1976): 279–86.
- Pomel, Fabienne. *Les voies de l'au-delà et l'essor de l'allégorie au Moyen Âge*. Nouvelle bibliothèque du Moyen Âge 57. Paris: Champion, 2001.
- Powrie, Sarah. "Spenser's Mutabilities and the Indeterminate Universe." *Studies in English Literature* 53, no. 1 (2013): 73–89.
- Putallaz, François-Xavier. "Censorship." In *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Robert Pasnau, 99–113. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Raimondi, Gianmario. "*Les Eschés amoureux*: Studio preparatorio ed edizione (I. vv. 1–3662)." *Pluteus* 8–9 (1998): 67–241.
- Ramsey, Lee C. "'The Sentence of It Sooth Is': Chaucer's *Physician's Tale*." *Chaucer Review* 6, no. 3 (1972): 185–97.
- Reif, Patricia. "The Textbook Tradition in Natural Philosophy, 1600–1650." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 30, no. 1 (1969): 17–32.
- Robertson, Kellie. "Abusing Aristotle." In *Speculative Medievalisms*, ed. Eileen A. Joy, Anna Klosowska, Nicola Masciandro, and Michael O'Rourke, 159–72. Brooklyn, NY: Punctum Books, 2013.
- . "Exemplary Rocks." In *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral: Ethics and Objects*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 91–121. Brooklyn, NY: Punctum Books, 2012.
- . "Medieval Materialism: A Manifesto." *Exemplaria* 22, no. 2 (2010): 99–118.
- Ronquist, E. C. "Patient and Impatient Encyclopaedism." In *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts*, ed. Peter Binkley, 31–46. Brill Studies in Intellectual History 79. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- Rosenfeld, Jessica. *Ethics and Enjoyment in Late Medieval Poetry: Love After Aristotle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Rossi, Pietro B. "'Odor suus me confortat et aliquantulum prolongat vitam meam': Il fragrante frutto e la morte di Aristotele." In *Vita longa: Vecchiaia e durata della vita nella tradizione medica e aristotelica antica e medievale*, ed. Chiara Crisciani and Luciana Repici, 87–119. Florence: SISMEL-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2009.
- Roumy, Franck. "L'origine et la diffusion de l'adage canonique *Necessitas non habet legem* (VIIIe–XIIIe s.)." In *Medieval Church Law and the Origins of the Western Legal Tradition: A Tribute to Kenneth Pennington*, ed. Wolfgang P. Müller and Mary E. Sommar, 301–19. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006.
- Rubin, Miri. *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Rudd, Gillian. *Greenery: Ecocritical Readings of Late Medieval English Literature*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.
- Ruggiers, Paul G. *The Art of the Canterbury Tales*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965.
- Saarinén, Risto. *Weakness of the Will in Medieval Thought: From Augustine to Buridan*. Leiden: Brill, 1994.
- Salter, Elizabeth. *Nicholas Love's "Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ"*. Salzburg: Universität Salzburg, 1974.
- Scanlon, Larry, and James Simpson, eds. *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006.
- Scase, Wendy. *Reginald Pecock*. Aldershot: Variorum, 1996.
- Schiff, Randy P. "Resisting Surfaces: Description, Distance Reading, and Textual Entanglement." *Exemplaria* 26, nos. 2–3 (2014): 273–90.
- Schmitt, Charles B. *Aristotle and the Renaissance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- . "Aristotle's Ethics in the Sixteenth Century: Some Preliminary Considerations." In *The Aristotelian Tradition and Renaissance Universities*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1984.
- . *John Case and Aristotelianism in Renaissance England*. Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983.

- Shmitt, Charles, and Dilwyn Knox. *Pseudo-Aristoteles Latinus: A Guide to Latin Works Falsely Attributed to Aristotle Before 1500*. London: Warburg Institute, 1985.
- Seymour, M. C. *Bartholomaeus Anglicus and His Encyclopedia*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1992.
- . *Sir John Mandeville*. Aldershot: Variorum, 1993.
- Shank, Michael H. "Natural Knowledge in the Latin Middle Ages." In *Wrestling with Nature: From Omens to Science*, ed. Peter Harrison, Ronald L. Numbers, and Michael H. Shank, 83–115. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Shapin, Steven. "Social Uses of Science." In *The Ferment of Knowledge: Studies in the Historiography of Eighteenth-Century Science*, ed. G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, 93–139. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- . *The Scientific Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Shuger, Debora K. *Sacred Rhetoric: The Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988.
- Sieper, Ernst. *Les Echechs amoureux: Eine altfranzösische Nachahmung des Rosenromans und ihre Englische Übertragung*. Weimar: Emil Felber, 1898.
- Simpson, James. "The Economy of Involucrum: Idleness in Reason and Sensuality." In *Through a Classical Eye: Transcultural and Transhistorical Visions in Medieval English, Italian and Latin Literature in Honour of Winthrop Wetherbee*, ed. Robert F. Yeager and Andrew Galloway, 390–412. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- . *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry: Alan of Lille's "Anticlaudianus" and John Gower's "Confessio Amantis"*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Sklute, Larry. *Virtue of Necessity: Inconclusiveness and Narrative Form in Chaucer's Poetry*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985.
- Smith, D. Vance. *The Book of the Incipit: Beginnings in the Fourteenth Century*. Medieval Cultures, vol. 28. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.
- Smith, Susan L. *The Power of Women: A Topos in Medieval Art and Literature*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995.
- Sneddon, Clive R. "The 'Bible du XIII^e siècle': Its Medieval Public in the Light of Its Manuscript Tradition." In *The Bible and Medieval Culture*, ed. W. Lourdaux and D. Verhelst, 127–40. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1979.
- Sobecki, Sebastian I. "Mandeville's Thought of the Limit: The Discourse of Similarity and Difference in *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*." *Review of English Studies* 53, no. 211 (2002): 329–43.
- Solmsen, Friedrich. "Nature as Craftsman in Greek Thought." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24, no. 4 (1963): 473–96.
- Somerset, Fiona. *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- . "Expanding the Langlandian Canon: Radical Latin and the Stylistics of Reform." *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 17, no. 1 (2008): 73–92.
- Sorabji, Richard, ed. *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Spade, Paul Vincent. "Insolubilia and Bradwardine's Theory of Signification." *Medioevo: Rivista di Storia della Filosofia Medievale* 7 (1981): 115–34.
- Speer, Andreas. "The Discovery of Nature: The Contribution of the Chartrians to Twelfth-Century Attempts to Found a *Scientia Naturalis*." *Traditio* 52 (1997): 135–51.
- Spiller, Elizabeth. *Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature: The Art of Making Knowledge, 1580–1670*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Stallybrass, Peter. "Books and Scrolls: Navigating the Bible." In *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies*, ed. Jennifer Andersen and Elizabeth Sauer, 44–79. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.
- Stanbury, Sarah. "Ecochaucer: Green Ethics and Medieval Nature." *Chaucer Review* 39, no. 1 (2004): 1–16.
- . *The Visual Object of Desire in Late Medieval England*. Philadelphia: University of

- Pennsylvania Press, 2008.
- Steel, Karl. *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011.
- Steinberg, Glenn A. "Chaucer's Mutability in Spenser's *Mutabilitie Cantos*." *Studies in English* 46, no. 1 (2006): 27–42.
- Steiner, Emily. "Compendious Genres: Higden, Trevisa, and the Medieval Encyclopedia." *Exemplaria* 27, nos. 1–2 (2015): 73–92.
- . *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Stinson, Timothy L. "Illumination and Interpretation: The Depiction and Reception of Faus Semblant in *Roman de la Rose* Manuscripts." *Speculum* 87, no. 2 (2012): 469–98.
- Stock, Brian. *Myth and Science in the Twelfth Century: A Study of Bernard Silvester*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972.
- Strubel, Armand. "La personification allégorique, avatar du mythe: Fortune, Raison, Nature et Mort chez Jean de Meun." In *Pour une mythologie du Moyen Âge*, ed. Laurence Harf-Lancner and Dominique Boutet, 61–72. Paris: École Normale Supérieure de Jeune Filles, 1988.
- Stump, Eleonore. "Aquinas's Account of Freedom: Intellect and Will." *Monist* 80, no. 4 (1997): 576–97.
- Sylla, Edith. "Autonomous and Handmaiden Science: St. Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham on the Physics of the Eucharist." In *The Cultural Context of Medieval Learning: Proceedings of the First International Colloquium on Philosophy, Science, and Theology in the Middle Ages*, ed. John Murdoch et al., 349–96. Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1975.
- . "Creation and Nature." In *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Arthur McGrade, 171–95. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- . "*Ideo quasi mendicare oportet intellectum humanum*: The Role of Theology in John Buridan's Natural Philosophy." In *The Metaphysics and Natural Philosophy of John Buridan*, ed. J. M. M. H. Thijssen and Jack Zupko, 221–45. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- . "Medieval Quantification of Qualities: The 'Merton School.'" *Archive for History of Exact Sciences* 8 (1971): 9–39.
- "Symposium on Intellectual History in the Age of Cultural Studies." *Intellectual History Newsletter* 18 (1996): 3–69.
- Teske, Roland J. "The Will as King over the Powers of the Soul: Uses and Sources of an Image in the Thirteenth Century." *Vivarium* 32, no. 1 (1994): 62–71.
- Teskey, Gordon. *Allegory and Violence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- . "Night Thoughts on Mutability." In *Celebrating Mutabilitie: Essays on Edmund Spenser's Mutabilitie Cantos*, ed. Jane Grogan, 24–39. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010.
- Thijssen, J. M. M. H. *Censure and Heresy at the University of Paris, 1200–1400*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998.
- Thomas, Keith. *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1983.
- Thompson, Silvanus Phillips, ed. *Petrus Peregrinus de Maricourt and His Epistola de Magnete*. London: Published for the British Academy by Henry Frowde, Oxford University Press, 1907.
- Thomson, Rodney M. *Catalogue of Medieval Manuscripts of Latin Commentaries on Aristotle in British Libraries*. Vols. 1, Oxford, and 2, Cambridge. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011–13.
- Tiffany, Daniel. *Toy Medium: Materialism and Modern Lyric*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
- Tinkle, Theresa. "The Case of the Variable Source: Alan of Lille's *De planctu naturae*, Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*, and Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 22 (2000): 341–77.
- Toivanen, Juhana. *Perception and the Internal Senses: Peter of John Olivi on the Cognitive*

- Functions of the Sensitive Soul*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Travis, Peter W. *Disseminal Chaucer: Rereading the Nun's Priest's Tale*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010.
- Tuve, Rosemond. *Allegorical Imagery: Some Mediaeval Books and Their Posterity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966.
- . "Guillaume's Pilgrim and the *Hous of Fame*." *Modern Language Notes* 45, no. 8 (1930): 518–22.
- Twomey, Michael. "Towards a Reception History of Western Mediaeval Encyclopedias in England Before 1500." In *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress*, ed. Peter Binkley, 329–62. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- Van Steenberghen, Fernand. *Aristotle in the West*. Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1955.
- Vickers, Brian. *English Science, Bacon to Newton*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- . "Francis Bacon, Feminist Historiography, and the Dominion of Nature." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69, no. 1 (2008): 117–41.
- Vitto, Cindy L. *The Virtuous Pagan in Middle English Literature*. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 79, pt. 5. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1989.
- Von Moos, Peter. "Païens et païens: La 'Quaestio' de Lambert du Mont sur le salut éternel d'Aristote." In *Religiosità e civiltà. Conoscenze, confronti, influssi reciproci tra le religioni*, ed. Giancarlo Andenna, 67–118. Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2013.
- Walls, Kathryn. "Did Lydgate Translate the *Pèlerinage de Vie Humaine*?" *Notes and Queries*, n.s., 24 (1977): 103–5.
- Watson, Nicholas. "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409." *Speculum* 70, no. 4 (1995): 822–64.
- Weisheipl, James A. "Curriculum of the Faculty of Arts at Oxford in the Early Fourteenth Century." *Mediaeval Studies* 26, no. 1 (1964): 143–85.
- . *Nature and Motion in the Middle Ages*. Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy 11. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1985.
- . "The Relationship of Medieval Natural Philosophy to Modern Science: The Contribution of Thomas Aquinas to Its Understanding." *Manuscripta* 20 (1976): 181–96.
- . "The Structure of the Arts Faculty in the Medieval University." *British Journal of Educational Studies* 19, no. 3 (1971): 263–71.
- Wetherbee, Winthrop. "The Literal and the Allegorical: Jean de Meun and the 'de Planctu Naturae'." *Mediaeval Studies* 33, no. 1 (2009): 264–91.
- . *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century: The Literary Influence of the School of Chartres*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. *Science and the Modern World*. New York: Macmillan, 1925.
- Whitman, Jon. *Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.
- . "Present Perspectives: Antiquity to the Late Middle Ages." In *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period*, ed. Jon Whitman, 33–70. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- Wieland, Georg. "The Reception and Interpretation of Aristotle's *Ethics*." In *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, Jan Pinborg, and Eleonore Stump, 657–72. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- Wielockx, Robert. "Le Ms. Paris Nat. Lat. 16096 et la condamnation du 7 mars 1277." *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 48 (1981): 227–37.
- Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Materialism: Selected Essays*. London: Verso, 2005.
- . *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Rev. ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Williams, Steven J. "Defining the *Corpus Aristotelicum*: Scholastic Awareness of Aristotelian Spuria in the High Middle Ages." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 58

- (1995): 29–51.
- . “Roger Bacon and the Secret of Secrets.” In *Roger Bacon and the Sciences: Commemorative Essays*, ed. Jeremiah Hackett, 365–74. Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 57. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- . *The Secret of Secrets: The Scholarly Career of a Pseudo-Aristotelian Text in the Latin Middle Ages*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003.
- Wilshire, Leland E. “The Oxford Condemnations of 1277 and the Intellectual Life of the Thirteenth-Century Universities.” In *Aspectus et Effectus: Essays and Editions in Grosseteste and Medieval Intellectual Life in Honor of Richard C. Dales*, ed. Gunar Freibergs, 113–24. New York: AMS Press, 1993.
- Wippel, John F. “The Condemnations of 1270 and 1277 at Paris.” *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 7 (1977): 169–201.
- . “Divine Knowledge, Divine Power and Human Freedom in Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent” In *Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence in Medieval Philosophy: Islamic, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives*, ed. Tamar Rudavsky, 213–41. Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985.
- . “The Parisian Condemnations of 1270 and 1277.” In *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jorge J. E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone, 65–73. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003.
- . “Thomas Aquinas and the Condemnation of 1277.” *Modern Schoolman* 72 (1995): 233–72.
- Wood, Chauncey. *Chaucer and the Country of the Stars: Poetic Uses of Astrological Imagery*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970.
- Wolfe, Cary. *What Is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.
- Wright, Steven. “Deguileville’s *Pèlerinage de Vie Humaine* as ‘Contrepartie Édifiante’ of the *Roman de la Rose*.” *Philological Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (1989): 399–422.
- Yamamoto, Dorothy. *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Zeeman, Nicolette. “Medieval Religious Allegory: French and English.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, ed. Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck, 148–61. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- . “Philosophy in Parts: Jean de Meun, Chaucer, and Lydgate.” In *Uncertain Knowledge: Scepticism, Relativism, and Doubt in the Middle Ages*, ed. Dallas G. Denery II, Kantik Ghosh, and Nicolette Zeeman, 213–38. Turnhout: Brepols, 2014.
- Zink, Michel. *Nature et poésie au Moyen Âge*. Paris: Fayard, 2006.

INDEX

compatibilist theory of; contradictory versions of; cultural hybridity of; *De anima*; — commentators on; *De animalibus*; *De caelo*; —in arts curriculum; —choice of goods in; — inclination in; *De generatione animalium*; *De interpretatione*; *De meteorologica*; East-West binary of; in English print market; English translations of; ethical works of; *Ethics*; —early modern popularity of; —escape of censure; —sovereign good in; fallibility of; on free will; on goal of knowledge; *Historia animalium*; —birds in; influence on vernacular literature; *Logic*, escape of censure; logical works of; in manuscript illuminations; manuscript transmission of; medieval champions of; *Metaphysics*; —Latin translation of; —parts and whole in; —Unmoved Mover in; *Nicomachean Ethics*; —English translation of; —influence of; *Physics*; —causation in; —commentaries on; —elemental motion in; —growth in; —“hap” in; —inclination in; —Latin translation of; —manuscripts of; —natural motion in; —necessity in; place in; —*topoi* of; *Politics*, English translation of; —printed editions of; *Rhetoric*; spurious works; reputed Trinitarianism of; in vernacular literature; on voids —death and afterlife; by suicide; tomb of; in university politics. *See also* Aristotle, salvation; *De pomo sive de morte Aristotilis*

—personifications; as Antichrist; as arts master; cautionary versions of; Christianized; Deguileville’s; Lady Nature and; Lydgate’s; as nature’s clerk; as rule of nature; as scriptor naturae. *See also* Magister Aristotle

—salvation; Franciscans on; as learned pagan; scholastic debate on; in *Secreta secretorum*

Armstrong, Adrian

art: goal-oriented; and nature; versus original; poetry as; representational failures of; as *techné*

artisan deity: in Ax of Nature metaphor; in Plato

arts curriculum, medieval: Aristotelian natural philosophy in; Aristotle in; *De pomo* in; Greek learning in; *libri naturales* in; non-Aristotelian; religious determination of; sensory world in; in understanding of spiritual truth

arts faculty, Parisian: determination of theological questions; disputation with theological faculty; protoempiricism of

Aston, Margaret

astrodeterminism; and fatalism; rebuttal of; in *Roman de la Rose*

astronomy: Aristotle on; *primum mobile* in

Augustine: *On Christian Doctrine*; use of Book metaphor

Augustinianism: allegory in; and Aristotelianism; Bonaventure’s; cognition in; concept of natural world; cosmology; in encyclopedias; natural reason in; in *Roman de la Rose*; semiotics of; theories of soul

Averroës: on Aristotle; monopsychism of; on the soul

Avicenna, on human soul

Ax of Nature metaphor; in Aquinas; artisan deity in; causality in; creative power in; divine plan in; division of material world; immanent model of; necessity in in; in *Le Pèlerinage de vie humaine*; in scholastic philosophy; transcendent model of

Bacon, Francis: on anthropomorphism; on Aristotle’s *Physics*; defenders of; on natural philosophy

Bacon, Roger: on art and nature; natural science of; *Secretum secretorum* commentary; on the senses; teaching of Aristotle; university politics of

Badel, Pierre-Yves; on Genius

Bartholomew Anglicus: *De proprietatibus rerum*; —Ladder metaphor in; —magnetism in; —popularity of; —translation of

Bennett, Jane

Bernard of Clairvaux; on faith and reason

Bernard Silvestris: *Cosmographia*; —nature as deity in; *De mundi universitate*; integumental allegory of; *Macrocosmus*

Best, Stephen: “The Way We Read Now”

bestiaries, medieval; exemplary meanings in; metaphor in
 Bhaba, Homi
 Bianchi, Luca
 Bible: and Book metaphor; discontinuous reading of; French translation of
 bioegalitarianism; human/animal
 biology, evolutionary
 Bloch, R. Howard
 Blumenberg, Hans; on Book of Nature metaphor; intellectual history of
 Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Renate
 Boccaccio, *Genealogie deorum gentilium*
 Boethius: *Consolatio philosophiae*; —chain of causes in; —Chaucer's translation of; —choice in; —"hap" in; —human/divine will in; —human freedom in; —love in; —motive powers in; —necessity in; —on providence; —on will; —works modeled on; as *magister* and *puer*
 Boethius of Dacia; condemnation of; intellectualist will of; radical Aristotelianism of
 Bonaventure; Book metaphor of; *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*; condemnation of Aristotle; on human understanding; on human will; *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*; on transubstantiation; on Peripatetics
The Book of John Mandeville; manuscript tradition of
 Book of Nature; in Aristotelianism; Augustine's; Bible and; Bonaventure's; immanent model of; Neoplatonic; transcendent version of; Victorine use of
 Bourret, Étienne
 Boyle, Robert: *A Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Receiv'd Notion of Nature*
 Bradwardine, Thomas; on covenant with God; *insolubilia* literature of; in Merton school; on rational intellect
 Braidotti, Rosi; on animal metaphor
 Breen, Katharine
 Brown, Peter
 Brownlee, Kevin
 Burger, Glenn
 Buridan, Jean: challenges to Aristotelianism; impetus theory; on magnetism
 Burley, Walter
 Burr, David
 Bynum, Caroline Walker

 Cadden, Joan
 Camille, Michael; on Deguileville
 Catto, Jeremy I.
 causality: Aristotelian; in Ax metaphor; chain of; cosmology and; covenantal; divine design of; from divine power; double; human/nonhuman continuum of; in Ladder of Nature metaphor; modern discussions on; between nature and deity; of place; secondary; temporal; Thomist; in understanding of nature
 Cavendish, Margaret
 Charles V (king of France): on natural philosophy; translation program of
 Chartier, Alain; *Traite de l'Esperance*
 Chaucer, Geoffrey; as Aristotle's heir; Deguileville's influence on; early modern reception of; engagement with physics; God/nature conflation in; Harvey's use of; Jean de Meun's influence on; Ladder of Nature in; manuscript tradition of; natural necessity in; natural world in; nature and artifice in; on Nature's authority; as "philosophical"; translations by. Works: *Book of the Duchess*; *Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue; —inclination in; —nature in; —voice of nature in; *Clerk's Tale*; *House of Fame*; *Knight's Tale*; *Legend of Good Women* Prologue; *Nun's Priest's Tale*; *Parliament of Fowls*; —chastity in; —choice in; —contingent Nature in; —divine/natural order in; —divine will in; —human exceptionalism in; —inclination in; —Jean de Meun's influence on; —nature personified in; —necessity in; —

thought experiment in; *The Physician's Tale*; —art and nature in; —chastity in; —free will in, —God's omnipotence in; —necessity in, (*see also* Lady Nature (*Physician's Tale*); *Second Nun's Tale*; *Squire's Tale*; *Treatise on the Astrolabe*; *Troilus and Criseyde*; *Wife of Bath's Tale*, inclination in; —Prologue

Chenu, M.-D.

choice: contingency of; in *Roman de la Rose*; scholastic debates over, Tempier on

Christianity: accommodation of Aristotelian philosophy to; authority of; coextensiveness with Latinity; compatibility with pagan learning; and natural moral order; and natural reason. *See also* theology

Christine de Pisan; heresy charges by; in *querelle de la Rose*

Chroust, Anton-Hermann

Cicero, *Somnium Scipionis*

Clasby, Eugene

Clement VI, Pope: censure of Ockham

Code, Lorraine

Codex Vatican Lateran 1012, Franciscan quodlibeta of

cognition: Aristotelian; Chaucer on; effect of love on; of natural world; Neoplatonic; reason and; as unbelieving

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome; on medieval animals

Col, Pierre: response to Gerson

Collingwood, R. G.: *The Idea of Nature*

compatibilism: Aquinas's; of Aristotle; Bonaventure on; Christian/pagan; versus human exceptionalism; human reason in; human will in; necessity in; in *Roman de la Rose*; Tempier on. *See also* free will

Condemnation of 1270; text of

Condemnation of 1277 (Paris); censure of natural philosophy; debate leading up to; and discussions of infinity; divine order in; effect on literary production; legacy of; on naturalism; reversal of; scholarship on; sexual morality in; significance of; against Thomists; on voids; will and intellect in

contingency: of choice; and divine knowledge; of human will; of nature; and necessity

Cooper, Lisa H.

Copeland, Rita

cosmography: models of natural philosophy; Neoplatonic; transcendent

cosmology: and Aristotelian natural philosophy; of *Image du monde*; causation and; epistemological problems of; Neoplatonic

Courtenay, William J.; on causality; on divine omnipotence; on university argument

The Court of Sapience

Crane, Susan

creation: Aristotle on; change and growth within; in *De pomo*; ex nihilo; ineffability of; nature as tool of; presence of God in; regularity of; sensual apprehension of

Crombie, A. C.

Cronon, William; on wilderness

cultural history, discourse in

Curtius, Ernst Robert; on Book of Nature

Dahlberg, Charles

Dante: *Letter to Con Grande*; portrayal of Aristotle

Darwin, Charles: Darwinism; on mutability of species

Dear, Peter

DeLanda, Manuel

Delany, Sheila

Deleuze, Gilles; assemblage model of; model of nature

De Libera, Alain

De pomo sive de morte Aristotilis; deathbed discussion in; manuscripts of; as pseudo-Aristotle; radicalism of. *See also* Aristotle, death and afterlife
 Derrida, Jacques: on voice
 determinism; Aristotelian; biological; free will and; natural; “new ecologies” and; in *querelle de la Rose*; scholastic controversy over
 devotion, affective models of
 Digby poet: on Eucharist; on spiritual understanding
 disposition: acceptable/unacceptable uses of; as biological determinism; in human exceptionalism; in human/nonhuman world; as necessity; Stoic
 disputations: Aristotle’s afterlife in; on *De pomo sive de morte Aristotilis*; Franciscan; in *Roman de la Rose*
Dits moraulx des philosophes
 Dod, Bernard G.
 Dominicans, Oxford: on will
 dream visions: allegorical; Chaucer’s; and natural philosophy; nature in; retirement of
 Dronke, Peter
 Duhem, Pierre
 Duns Scotus, John; on causation; Chaucer’s response to; on Eucharist; on spiritual movement

 Eamon, William
 Eberle, Patricia
 ecomimesis
 Economou, George: on Alan of Lille; on personified Nature
 Einstein, Albert: relativistic physics of
electio. *See* choice
 Elizabeth I (queen of England): as Dame Nature; self-representation of
 Emery, Kent
 encyclopedias; Aristotelian elements in; Book metaphor in; continuous reading of; educable readers of; formal structures of; modern; Nature tropes in; serial reading of; syncretism of; taxonomy of; university use of; vernacular
 Endelechia (world soul)
 Enlightenment: human/nature relationship in; on human/nonhuman relationships; models of nature
enumeratio; role in human understanding
 environment: human relationship to; medieval representations of; mesh of; scholastic debate over
 epistemology, medieval: ontology and
 Eriugena, John Scotus: *Periphyseon*
Erroris philosophorum (thirteenth century)
Les Eschéz d’Amours; chess game of; manuscript tradition of; natural philosophy in; sexual inclination in
 ethics: of allegory; of Aristotelian science; function of place in; of natural knowledge; of natural reason; in nature; physical influences on; physics and
 Eucharist: accident and subject in; Aristotelianism and; contravention of natural order; in Deguileville; English heterodoxy on; Lollard view of; medieval debates on; physics of; quantification in. *See also* sacraments; transubstantiation
 Évrart de Conty; *Le livre des Eschez amoureux moralisés*; —allegory in; —natural sciences in; —theory of poetry in
 exceptionalism, human; versus compatibilism; concerning reason; disposition in; and divine will; and figuration of nature; inclination and; in love; versus natural determinism; from natural world; in Paris of 1270s; in *Le Pèlerinage de vie humaine*; philosophical questions of; in *Roman de la Rose*

experience: authority and; in discourse of nature; moral authority of; proof by

Fasciculi zizaniorum (anti-Lollard text)

Fishacre, Richard

Fisher, John

Fleming, John V.

Fletcher, J. M.

foreknowledge, divine; in *Roman de la Rose*

Foucault, Michel

Franciscans: on Aristotle's salvation; covenantal theology of; on human will; poverty of; quodlibetal disputations; on transubstantiation

Franklin-Brown, Mary

Freddoso, Alfred J.

freedom, natural; of judgment; nature's gift of; source of

free will: academic discussions of; Aristotle on; Chaucer's belief in; concerning sin; contingency of; and determinism; and divine omniscience; imitation of divine power; and laws of cosmos; misuse of; nature's commitment to; in *Le Pèlerinage de vie humaine*; and planetary influence; in *Roman de la Rose*. *See also* will, human

Funkenstein, Amos

Fürstenspiegel, Middle English

Gabrovsky, Alexander

Galileo: on natural philosophy; *Il Saggiatore*

Gandavistae (students)

Gaukroger, Stephen

Gelber, Hester Goodenough

Gellrich, Jesse

Genius (*Roman de la Rose*); as counterpoint to Nature; as parody of Alan of Lille. *See also* Jean de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*

Gerson, Jean: heresy charges by; on Jean de Meun; on marriage; personified nature of; in *querelle de la Rose*; sexual inclination in; "Traictie d'une vision faite contre Le Ronmant de la rose"; —Eloquence Theologienne of; —Fol Amoureux of

Ghosh, Kantik

Giles of Rome, censure of; *De regimine principum*; —choice in; *Les Eschéz d'Amours* and; —free will in; —"hap" in

Gilson, Étienne

God: as artisan deity; contingency of; creative nature of; eternity of; as final cause; in *L'image du monde*; immensity of; intervention in order; knowledge of; presence in creation; productive powers of; timeless existence of; understanding through analogy; unknowability of. *See also* knowledge, divine; omnipotence, divine; power, divine; will, divine

Godfrey of Fontaines

Gossuin de Metz, syncretism of. *See also* *Image du monde*

Gould, Stephen Jay

Gower, John: *Confessio Amantis*; —astronomical signs in; —Virginia episode; humanist politics of; tripartite definition of philosophy

Grace Dieu (*Le Pèlerinage de vie humaine*): debate with Lady Nature. *See also* Guillaume de Deguileville, *Le Pèlerinage de vie humaine*

Grafton, Anthony

grammar, Stoic theory of

Grant, Edward

Grant, Iain Hamilton

Great Chain of Being; love in

Gregory IX, Pope: on natural philosophy
 Gregory of Nazianzus; on Aristotle's death
 Gregory the Great, Saint; on allegory
 Grosseteste, Robert; *De iride*; on the senses
 Guattari, Félix; assemblage model of; model of nature
 Guillaume de Deguileville; allegorical practice of; on analogy; anti-typological strategy of; dualism of; ethical poetics of; exegetical criticism of; inclination in; influence in England; life of; poetic authority of; and university debates. Works: *Le Pèlerinage de Jésus Christ*; *Le Pèlerinage de vie humaine*; —allegory in; —audience of; —and Ax of Nature; —body and soul in; —Chaucer's translation of; —composition of; —distrust of body in; —Eucharist in; —exceptionalism in; —hermeneutical practice of; —and knowledge of nature; —Lydgate's adaptations of; —manuscript tradition of; —Misericorde in; —and natural philosophy; —personification of Aristotle; —and *Roman de la Rose*; —Rude Entendement in; —Sapience in; —translations of; —will in. *See also* Lady Nature (*Pèlerinage de vie humaine*)
 Guillaume de Lorris, *Roman de la Rose*
 Gunn, Alan

 Hadot, Pierre
 Hagen, Susan K.
 Haraway, Donna
 Harman, Graham
 Harvey, Gabriel; on natural philosophy; praise for Lydgate; on Spenser; use of Chaucer
 Harvey, Susan
 Hayles, N. Katherine
 Heller-Roazen, Daniel; on Nature's contingency
 Henry of Ghent: on divine illumination; students of; theory of knowledge; on will
 Henryson, Robert; *Testament of Cresseid*
 Heraclitus, on hidden nature
 Heyworth, Gregory
 Higden, Ralph: *Polychronicon*
 Higgins, Iain Macleod; *Writing East*
 Hilton, Walter: *The Scale of Perfection*
 historiography, materialist
 Hobbes, Thomas: *Leviathan*; on natural motion
 Hoccleve, Thomas; on Chaucer
 Hödl, Ludwig
 Holcot, Robert
 Honorius of Autun: *Imago mundi*. *See also* *Image du monde*
 Horobin, Simon
 Hudson, Anne
 Hugh of St. Victor: Book of Nature metaphor of; *De sacramentis*; reading of nature
 Hult, David
 humanism: nature in; Renaissance: distrust of nature personified; rise of
 humanity: animals and; as embedded subset; encounters with the divine; invisible forces acting on; as measure of nature; as microcosm; natural metaphors on; in natural world; nontranscendence of; place in nature; power of volition; relationship to environment; spirituality and; transcendent place of
 human-nonhuman relationships: anthropomorphism in; in Aristotelian natural philosophy; causality in; coextensiveness of; cultural assumptions about; in Enlightenment empiricism; inclination in; materiality of; in nature personified
 Huot, Sylvia; on Deguileville; on Macrobius; on *Roman de la Rose*
 hylomorphism; in explanations of transubstantiation

Image du monde: Aristotelian science in; Ax metaphor in; 186; and encyclopedic reading; inexpressibility topos of; on limits of knowledge; manuscript tradition of; nature and God in;

imagination, argument *secundum imaginationem*

immanence: aesthetics of; in Ax of Nature metaphor; in Book of Nature metaphor; of Darwinism; ethical implications of; in Ladder of Nature metaphor; of nature metaphors; reading practices of; in understanding of analogy. *See also* Aristotelianism; nature, immanent

Incarnation: mediatory power of; virtuous pagans before

inclination; aesthetic consequences of; Aristotelian; Aristotle on; causes of; dangerous; in discourse of nature; in everyday life; versus force; human and animal; human and nonhuman; and human exceptionalism; in human/nonhuman world; lack of law for; in love; and moral freedom; “new ecologies” and; overcoming of; and physical form; physics of; place-based; soul’s negotiation of; theological debates on; in vernacular poetry; will and

integumentum; as distinct from allegory; of nature. *See also* allegory, integumental

intellectual history

intromission, optical theory of

Irvine, Martin

Isidore of Seville; definition of nature

Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Hierosolymitana*

James of Ascoli

Jameson, Fredric

Jardine, Lisa

Jauss, Hans Robert; on allegory

Jean de Meun: ostensible Averroist views of; *Roman de la Rose*; —antifeminism of; —Aristotelian science in; —art and nature in; —astrodeterminism in; —audiences of; —Chaucer’s translation of; —compatibilist views in; —and Condemnation of 1277; —contingency in; —English translation of; —free will in; —God’s omniscience in; —human exceptionalism in; —inclination in; —inexpressibility of nature in; —links to Deguileville; —manuscript tradition of; —mimesis in; —naturalism of; —natural knowledge in; —natural world in; —necessity in; —relationship to Alan of Lille; —representational practice of; —responses to; —voluntarism of; —will in; translation of Boethius’s *Consolatio philosophiae*. *See also* Genius; Lady Nature (*Roman de la Rose*); La Vieille

Jean de Montreuil

John of Pouilly: disputations on Aristotle; quodlibetal questions of

Johnson, Barbara: “Women and Allegory”

Johnson, Mark

Jones, Peter Murray

Jordan, Mark

Juvenal, antifeminism of

Kamath, Stephanie; on Lydgate

Karnes, Michelle

Kay, Sarah; on Deguileville; on Genius

Keller, Evelyn Fox

Kilwardby, Robert (archbishop of Canterbury): censure of Aristotle’s *Physics*

King, Peter

Kiser, Lisa

knowledge, divine; human; natural

Knowlton, E. C.

Korolec, J. B.
kynde. *See* nature

Ladder of Nature metaphor

Lady Nature:: and Aristotelian science; authority of; in discussions of exceptionalism; early modern silencing of; French representations of; iconography of; poetic potential of; reflection of technological advances; in vernacular poetry. *See also* nature personified

Lady Nature (*De planctu naturae*); absence of; appearance of; and Chaucer's Lady Nature; as copier of divine forms; as creative energy; dress of; essence of; forge of; Gerson on; as goddess; iconography of; indescribability of; as moral governor; moralized; Neoplatonism of; representational powers of; role in divine plan; on sexuality; as vicar. *See also* Guillaume de Deguileville, *Le Pèlerinage de vie humaine*

Lady Nature (*Faerie Queene*); on Aristotelian processes; and Chaucer's nature; as Platonic nous; relation to Dame Mutabilitie. *See also* Spenser, Edmund, *The Faerie Queene*

Lady Nature (*Parliament of Fowls*); and Alan of Lille; authority of; didacticism of; gendered performance of; on immutability; indescribability of; as textual topos. *See also* Chaucer, Geoffrey, *Parliament of Fowls*

Lady Nature (*Pèlerinage de vie humaine*); on body; debate with Grace Dieu; mutability of; natural/divine law in; on necessity; as obstructive; predecessors of; redundancy of; and Rude Entendement; silencing of. *See also* Guillaume de Deguileville, *Le Pèlerinage de vie humaine*

Lady Nature (Physician's Tale); on art and nature; authority of; contingent will of; and divine contingency. *See also* Chaucer, Geoffrey, *The Physician's Tale*

Lady Nature (*Roman de la Rose*); *apophasis* of; art and; authority of; charter of; on compatibilism; contingency of; as counterpoint to Genius; exceptionalism of; on fatalism; on free will; on God's foreknowledge; on human will; iconography of; on inclination; ineffability of; lament of; as *magistra*; mimesis of; moral message of; narrator's view of; on natural phenomena; and necessity; as procreatrix; on providence; as source of freedom; tension with Genius; unrepresentability of; voluntarist rhetoric of; on will. *See also* Jean de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*

Lahey, Stephen E.

Lakoff, George

Lambert of Cologne

Langland, William: *Piers Plowman*

Lateran Council, Fourth (1215); on Eucharist

Latour, Bruno; *We Have Never Been Modern*

law, natural: consent to; and divine law; ethics reflecting; and human sexuality; inflexibility of; as moral compass; reconciliation with scripture; selective enforcement of; spiritual understanding and; suspension of

learning: Greek; humanistic, past and present in

LeFèvre, Jean: *Respit de la mort*

Leicester, Marshall

Lewis, C. S.

Lindberg, David C.

Livy, Harvey's comments on

logic

Lollards: on Aristotelian natural philosophy; Aristotelian rationalism and; Lydgate's response to; sacramental views of; view of Eucharist

Louis XV (king of France), on *via moderna*

love: ambivalent nature of; effect on cognition; in Great Chain of Being; human exceptionalism in; human realm of; inclination in; in Ladder of Nature metaphor; as manifestation of nature; metaphysical operation of; natural models of; natural predisposition for; and natural reason; Ovidian; parental; in physical realm; physics of;

and sexuality; as *techné*; terms of engagement; visual nature of

Love, Nicholas: *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*

Lovejoy, A. O.

Lucretius

Lydgate, John; allegories of science; authority of nature in; cognition in; contributions to *querelle de la Rose*; Deguileville's influence on; Harvey's praise for; natural necessity in; on natural reason; personification allegory of; responses to Jean de Meun; theory of poetry; translational practice of. Works: *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*; —adaptation of *Le Pèlerinage de vie humaine*; —allegorization of nature; —Aristotle in; —attribution of; —changes from Deguileville; —Eucharist in; —manuscript tradition of; —Reason in; —response to Lollards; —secondary causes in; —university science in; —Wycliffite concerns in; *Reson and Sensuallyte*; —attribution of; —audience of; —dangers of natural reason in; —date of; —Diana in; —inclination in; —infallible nature in; —inner/outer senses in; —integumental allegory in; —language of proof in; —*libri naturales* in; —magnetic attraction in; —manuscript tradition of; —materiality in; —*ordinatio* of; —personified nature in; —*querelle de la Rose* and; —rationalizing nature in; —Reason in; —response to theological controversy; —textual communities of; —title of; —use of Aristotle; —Venus in

Lynch, Kathryn L.

MacIntyre, Alasdair

Macrobius: cosmology of; on hidden nature; Platonism of; *Somnium Scipionis* commentary; on soul

Magister Aristotle. *See also* Aristotle, personifications

magnetism; in Aristotelian physics; of love; magnet as *mineral moralisée*; in *Parliament of Fowls*; in vernacular poetry

Mandelbaum, Maurice

Mandeville, John. *See The Book of John Mandeville*

Manfred (king of Sicily)

Mann, Jill

Marcus, Sharon: "The Way We Read Now"

Marenbon, John

Marrone, Steven P.

Marsilius of Inghen

Martianus Capella: *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*; on hidden nature

Marvel, Andrew: nature personified in

materiality: nature and; theories of

material world, aesthetic of; Aristotle on; divine signifiers of; empirical knowledge from; ethics of; exemplification of the divine; homologies with spiritual world; and immaterial realm; laws governing; manifestation of divine desire; nature and; patterns of; poetic representations of; properties and essences of; reading of; separation of morality from matter: eternal nature of; as recipient of action; relationship to mind

Maupeu, Philippe

McWebb, Christine

Meditationes vitae Christi (pseudo-Bonaventure)

Mercer, Christia

Merchant, Carolyn

Merton school (Oxford); on quantity; realism of

metaphors: absolute; animal; of bestiary; diachronic reading of; of human-natural world relationships; hylozoist; pervasiveness of; pith/bark; in sacred writing; of science; synchronic reading of. *See also* allegory

metaphors, nature: anthropomorphizing; as anti-definitions; continuum of; early modern view of; human will in; immanent versions of; instrumentality of; in material science controversies; mechanical; in medieval taxonomies; modern distrust of; semantic variance

in; varied deployments of. *See also* Ax of Nature metaphor; Book of Nature metaphor;
 Ladder of Nature metaphor
 metaphysics: as first philosophy; of presence
 Michelet, Fabienne
 Middleton, Anne
 Miller, Mark: *Philosophical Chaucer*
 Milton, John: *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*
 mimesis: in literature; in medieval philosophy; Neoplatonic
 Minnis, Alastair J.; on integumental allegory
 Miskimin, Alice
 modernity: as artifact of Aristotelian understanding; materiality's relation to; "the natural"
 in; Renaissance definition of
 Modersohn, Mechthild
 monism
 Montacute, Thomas
 moral philosophy: Aristotelian; Pecoock on; separation from physics
 More, Henry
 Morton, Jonathan
 Morton, Timothy; on Book of Nature; *Ecology without Nature*; on mesh of nature; on
 Romantic nature
 motion: elemental; eternal nature of
 motion, natural: Aristotelian ideas of; causes of; Hobbes on; in *L'image du monde*; in
 medieval theology; sources of; sublunary
 Müller, F. W.
 mythography: of Alan of Lille; of Chartrian Neoplatonism; models of nature; Spenser's;
 theological stricture on

 naturalism: Aristotelian; Bragman; censure of; in Chaucer; dangers of; hostility to; limits of;
 relationship to unorthodoxy; sacramental
 natural philosophy: academic controversies over; and allegory; analogies used in; areas of
 inquiry in; bases of; causal theories of; changes to; clerical model of; commonplaces of;
 common profit through; cosmographical models of; debates over; deficiencies of; dream
 visions and; dullness in; English fifteenth-century; failures concerning cosmos; failures
 concerning nature; hermeneutic dangers of; interpretive practices of; limits of; modern
 pastiche of; Neoplatonist; Newton's; obscuring of physical truth; at Oxford; in penitential
 treatises; poetic vocabulary of; relationship to theology; in Renaissance arts curriculum;
 and revelation; textual authority in; in university curricula; university debates over;
 vernacular genres of; the visible in
 natural philosophy, Aristotelian: appeal for medieval thinkers; Aristotle's afterlife and; in
 arts curriculum; and biblical truth; censure of 1277; and Christian doctrine; demise of;
 dissemination into vernacular; in early modern period; and ecclesiastical orthodoxy;
 exclusion of mathematics; in explanation of scripture; human-nonhuman interactions in;
 influence on university; limits of; Lollards on; medieval genealogy of; on Nature as vicar;
 Neoplatonic cosmology and; sympathy in; threat to revealed truth; and voluntarist
 theology. *See also* science, Aristotelian
 natural theology, nineteenth-century
 natural world: ethical detachment from; human role in; inexpressibility of; literary
 digressions on; Neoplatonic knowledge of; in Renaissance humanism; rhetorical tropes of;
 sensory cognition of; stability of; unreliability of appearances in
 nature: agency of; alliance with didactic poetry; alternative conceptions of; analogies of self
 in; anthropomorphosis of; art and; and artifice; as artisan; ataxia of; binary figurations of;
 birth of; as carpenter; as change; charisma of; classical understanding of; competing
 accounts of; concealment of; contingency of; cosmographical model of; creative powers

of; cultural change and; current debates over; Darwinian; death of; deictic; Deleuzo-Guattarian model of; demonstrative reading of; determined/determining; and divine will; earthly and spiritual; ecomimesis of; epistemological investigation of; errors in; ethics in; exceptionalist thought on; as extension of divine plan; fallen; figuration of; goal-oriented; humanist critique of; human place in; hylozoist metaphors of; inaccessibility of; inexpressibility of; instrumentality of; key tropes for; link to reason; listening to; mechanical; mediating aspects of; medieval tropology of; as mirror; in modern ecology; moral agency of; moral authority of; as mutable *physis*; mythographic models of; necessity of; versus nurture; ontological indeterminacy of; as originary force; pastoral mode of; as peaceable kingdom; as personified deputy; poetic descriptions of; polysemous conceptions of; posthumanist writings on; as principle of *taxis*; in *querelle de la Rose*; rationalist interpretations of; reading of; as resource; return to; rhetorical history of; rhizomatic; role in social progress; Romantic views of; rules for describing; scholastic view of; as secondary cause; secretive; *secundum imaginationem*; semiotic reading of; in sensible world; as sexual governor; social doctrines of; spiritual understanding of; taxonomic modes of; theologians' reading of; university politics of; ventriloquizing of; vernacular vocabulary of; as *vicaria Dei*; volitional acts of; voluntarist position on nature, Aristotelian; versus Augustinian; drive within; the invisible in; versus Neoplatonic; university debate over; worker and work in. *See also* nature, immanent
 nature, Augustinian; inscrutability of; semiotics of; versus Thomist
 nature, Chaucerian: authority of; dynamism of; regulatory
 nature, cosmographical; versus encyclopedic
 nature, Enlightenment; human/nature relationship in; posthumanist critiques of
 nature, immanent; causes of; figures for; versus Neoplatonic nature; the observable in; versus transcendent nature. *See also* nature, Aristotelian
 nature, Neoplatonic; versus Aristotelian; generative process of; as handmaiden. *See also* nature, transcendent
 nature, transcendent; agency of; allegory and; versus Aristotelian nature; versus immanent nature; operator error in; in *Parliament of Fowls*; reading of; semiotic reading of. *See also* nature, Neoplatonic
 nature personified; in academic treatises; aesthetic projects of; affective bonds of; affirmation of desire; in Aristotelian science; as Christian symbol; contrasting images of; as critique; direct address by; in early modern era; in ethics; feminine; Gerson's; as goddess figure; and God's omnipotence; humanist distrust of; human/nonhuman issues in; hypotheses concerning humanity; indeterminacy of; in Lydgate; in Marvel; and material nature; mediation by; as moral arbiter; ontological mediation by; and Oxford natural philosophy; problems of embodiment in; in *querelle de la Rose*; spatialized abstraction of; tangible/intangible aspects of; in vernacular literature. *See also* Lady Nature
 Nauta, Lodi
 necessity; Aristotle on; astronomical; in Ax metaphor; compatibilist view of; and contingency; and divine knowledge; domains of; exemptions from; law of; moral; natural; natural and spiritual; pure; restraint on will; role in grace; scholastic conversations about; of sexuality; simple and conditional; suspension of laws; teleological model of; theological; in vernacular literature; voluntarist view of
 Neckam, Alexander: *De naturis rerum*
 Neoplatonism: versus Aristotelianism; Book metaphor of; Chartrian; Chaucer's; cognition in; Great Chain of Being in; on immaterial ideas; Ladder of Nature metaphor in; mimesis in; natural world in; reception of texts; sensible world in; Victorine. *See also* transcendence
 Newman, Barbara; on female agency; on goddess figures
 Newton, Isaac; natural philosophy of
 Nicholas of Cusa, on voluntarism

Nievergelt, Marco
 nominalism, conflict with realism
 non-contradiction, law of
 nonhuman world: agency of; ventriloquizing of. *See also* human-nonhuman relationships
 Norman, Robert: *The Newe Attractiue*
 North, J. D.

 Oldcastle, John
 Olivi, Peter John
 omnipotence, divine: versus Aristotelian naturalism; contingency of; human will and;
 hypothetical possibilities of; limits to; manifestation in world. *See also* power, divine
 omniscience, divine: eternal presence of; free will and
 ontology: epistemology and; flat; permeability in; problems of; substance
 order: divine/natural; natural; systems of
 Oresme, Nicole; challenges to Aristotelianism; translations of Aristotle
 orthodoxy: and Aristotelian natural philosophy; in Aristotelian science; in fifteenth-century
 English literature; Lydgate's
 O'Sullivan, Daniel E.
 Oxford: and Condemnations of 1277; Dominicans of; early modern philosophy at;
 mathematical science in; natural philosophy at

 pagans, virtuous; salvation of; in vernacular literature
 Paré, Gérard; on providence
 Park, Katharine
 Pasnau, Robert; *Metaphysical Themes, 1274–1671*
 pastoral, Renaissance
 Pearsall, Derek
 Peckham, John; compatibilist views of; condemnation of Aristotle; on Eucharist; university
 politics of
 Pecock, Reginald; *Book of Faith*; condemnation of; on “moral philosophie”; place among
 contemporary theologians
 Penrose, Roger
 Perler, Dominik
 personification. *See* Lady Nature; nature personified
 Peter Lombard, *Sentences*
 Peter of Candia (Pope Alexander V)
 Petrus Peregrinus, on magnetism
 Philemon (physiognomer)
 Philips, Helen
 philosophers, pagan; *vitae* of
 “philosophie,” medieval; academic debates over; human/nonhuman elements of; as natural
 philosophy; and “philosophis”; scope of; shifts of meaning in
 philosophy: definition of Aristotelian; changes in meaning of; as servant of theology;
 university versus popular. *See also* natural philosophy
 physicians, medieval; greed of
 physics: continuum with metaphysics; and ethics; of Eucharist; of human will; of light; of
 love; Merton school of; moralized; Newtonian; nonhuman realm of; popular versus
 academic; scholastic *philosophia* in; separation from moral philosophy; terms of
 engagement; textual politics of. *See also* natural philosophy
 physics, Aristotelian: application to sacraments; Eucharist and; insufficiency of; magnetism
 in; metaphysics derived from; placializing of; politics derived from; and sacramental
 culture. *See also* science, Aristotelian
Physiologus

physis: Aristotle's; continual change of; in creation of mankind; figuring; mutable; nature as principle of; textual politics of
 piety, affective
 pilgrimage narratives
 place: causality of; charisma of; as destiny; as inclination; medieval concept of; power exerted by; properties of
 planets: influence of. *See also* astrodeterminism
 Plato: influence on Gnostics; reputed Trinitarianism of; — *Timaeus*, artisan deity in; — Demiurge of; —nature in
 Plumwood, Val
 poetry, early modern: separation from natural philosophy; virtue through
 poetry, medieval: allegorical; as art; digressions in; early modern reception of; "encyclopedic"; as form of doctrine; influence of academic debate on; natural philosophy vocabulary of; natural science in; necessity in; and physical world; proper role of; representational problems of; scientific passages in
 poetry, vernacular: academic debates on; allegorical; arguments over nature; Book metaphor in; commentary on nature; *dispositio* in; inclination in; Lady Nature in; magnet metaphor in; nature personified in; physical science in
 Polak, Lucie
 politics, university; Aristotle's afterlife in; Augustinian versus Aristotelian. *See also* disputations; universities
 Pomel, Fabienne
 posthumanism: analogizing; critique of Enlightenment nature; materiality in; on nature
 poststructuralism, on presence
 power, divine: absolute; and Aristotelian causality; as causal; heresy concerning; ordained; originary. *See also* omnipotence, divine
 predestination, teleological model of
 prehumanism: bivalent; materialisms of
 presence, allegorical
The Prick of Conscience; academic and spiritual knowledge in; on arts curriculum; celestial movements in; natural description in; penitential themes of
primum mobile
 Prior, O. H.
Problemata (pseudo-Aristotle)
 prosopopeia: Chaucer's; medieval uses of; Quintilian's
 providence: Boethian; divine; inscrutability of; nonnecessitated; unknowability of
 providentialism
 Puttenham, George: "The Art of Poesie"

quaestio analysis
 quantification: Aristotelian; Eucharist and; Merton Calculators'; as trope of modernity
 quantum theory, causality in
querelle de la Rose; chastity in; determinism in; Lydgate's contributions to; nature in; sexuality in
 Quintilian, prosopopeia of

rainbows: Aristotelian explanation of; in medieval optics; mythographic descriptions of
ratio, divine: human discovery of
 rationalism: classical philosophers on; dangers of; in Western identity
 rationalism, Aristotelian: and Lollard heretics; sacramental culture in; Thomist
 reading: diachronic; early modern practices of; figurative; immanent practices of; of Marxism; of material world; microcosmic; nature of; orderly; of psychoanalysis; sequential; serial mode of; surface; symptomatic; synchronic; taxonomic; transcendent

practice of
 reason, human: in Aristotelian science; and cognition; compatibilist view of; demonstrative; ethical potential of; as instrument of faith; link to nature; natural world in; opposition to faith; scholastic debates over; as tool of heretics; truths inaccessible to; as will's handmaiden
 reason, natural: application to theology; Aristotelian; and arts of love; association with unorthodoxy; Christianity and; correct uses of; dangers of; English reformist debates on; in English texts; ethics of; following Wyclif; and heresy; Thomist
 Renaissance: Aristotelianism in; Aristotelian natural philosophy in; "death of nature" in; decline of Aristotelianism in; definition of modernity; natural world in; nature personified in; realpolitik of; silencing of Lady Nature
 Richard II (king of England), and Anne of Bohemia
 Richard de Bury (bishop of Durham)
 Richard of Middleton
 rocks: charisma of; motion of; virtues of
Roman de Silence, Nature and Nurture in
 Ronquist, E. C.
 Rosenfeld, Jessica; *Ethics and Enjoyment in Late Medieval Poetry*
 Rubin, Miri
 Rudd, Gillian

 sacraments: Aquinas on; and Aristotelian physics; Aristotelian undermining of; Aristotelian understanding of; as causes; heterodox interpretations of; institutional understanding of; Lollards on; medieval debates on; physical explanations of. *See also* Eucharist
 saints' tombs, cult of
 Sargent, Michael G.
scala naturae. *See* Ladder of Nature
 Schmitt, Charles B.
 science: continuity with antiquity; Copernican; early modern discourse of; experimental; figurative language of; mathematical; metaphors of; occult; and "old religion"; pre-experimental; separation of human pursuits from; twentieth-century metaphors of
 science, academic; and allegorical practice; competing versions of; influence on popular poetry
 science, Aristotelian; biological works; Continental reception of; divine plan and; ecclesiastical authorities on; effect on aesthetic practice; English antipathy to; ethics of; following Wyclif; form in; influence on medieval literature; Lollard sermons on; material world in; medieval reception of; and medieval scholasticism; naturalism in; orthodoxy in; reason in; relationship to theology; Renaissance shift from; seed genesis in; sensory experience in; teleological principles of; translations of; transubstantiation and; undermining of sacraments; at University of Paris; university reception of. *See also* natural philosophy, Aristotelian; physics, Aristotelian
 science, Greek: and Christian revelation; Christian use of; Lydgate on
 science, medieval: analogy in; decline in; manuscript circulation in; natural phenomena in; in poetry; relationship to literature; as self-cultivation; thought experiment in
 science, natural: changing attitudes toward; in medieval poetry; Roger Bacon's *scientia*, East-West transmission of
 Scientific Revolution; antifigurationalism of; distrust of analogy; dualism of; space in *Secretum secretorum*; Aristotle's death in; Aristotle's salvation in; body and soul in; in Cambridge University Library MS Gg.4.25; characterization of Aristotle; English translations of; necessity in; pagan writers in; popularity of; popular tradition of; printed editions of; proto-Christian Aristotle of; Roger Bacon's commentary on; textual transmission of; in university curricula; versions of
 self: medieval conception of; nature's mirror of; opposition to world

Seneca, *De brevitate vitae*

sensation: reception of; unreliable

senses: apprehension of creation; Aristotelian validation of; as epistemological instrument;
as fallen; inner and outer; proper use of; search for truth; in spiritual knowledge;
unreliability of

sensory perception: of change; and divine knowledge; faith and; of natural world; role in
natural philosophy

sensuality, medieval meaning of

sentience, sliding scale of

sexuality, human: in Chaucer; determined or free; and love; and natural law

Shapin, Steven

Shirley, John; French source of; translation of *Secretum secretorum*

Sidney, Sir Philip; "The Defence of Poetry"; on *Troilus and Criseyde*

Sieper, Ernst

Siger of Brabant; condemnation of; excommunication of; heresy charges against;
intellectualist will of; radical Aristotelianism of

signatures, doctrine of

signifiers, spiritual: physical signs and

Simpson, James; *Sciences and the Self*

Smith, D. Vance

Sobecki, Sebastian I.

Socrates, deathbed symposium of

Solmsen, Friedrich

Somerset, Fiona

soul; Aristotelian; body and; education of; immortality of; motion of; natural powers of; as
partitive; Platonic; posthumous existence of; resurrection of; shared substances of;
sensory; in sensory perception debates; as substantial form of body

sound theory, Aristotelian

South English Legendary; scientific digression in
speculum naturae

Speer, Andreas

Spenser, Edmund; archaic language of; disorder in; *The Faerie Queene*; —Arlo Hill
parliament; —change in; —cycles in; —Dame Mutability of; —medieval prototypes in; —
Mutabilitie Cantos; —mythography of; —stability in; —theological message of; —time in,
(see also Lady Nature (*The Faerie Queene*)); modernity of; personification allegory of;
theological ambitions of

spirituality: material pathways to; revealing through material things; signifiers of; in
understanding of nature

Sprat, Thomas: mistrust of analogy; on scientific discourse

Stallybrass, Peter

Stanbury, Sarah

Steel, Karl

Steiner, Emily

Stow, John

Strode, Ralph; debate with Wyclif

the sublime, Romantic

sublunary world: versus eternal realm; natural motion in

sun: as cause; generative capacity of

surfaces, deictic value of

Sylla, Edith

sympathy, physical law of

taxonomies: Aristotelian; consequences of; of encyclopedias; as heuristic for understanding

nature; medieval authors' use of; as mode of reading; as mode of reception; modern distrust of; versus ontology; phallogocentric; versus rhizomatic relationships; in thinking about nature

teleology: Aquinas on; Aristotelian; of becoming; and human relations; moral lessons of Tempier, Étienne; on compatibilist solutions; concern over teaching of Aristotle; Condemnation of 1270; Condemnation of 1277; condemnation of natural reason; denunciation of philosophy; on *dispositio*; on free choice; on necessity; on secondary causation; against Thomists; university politics of; on voids; on will

texts: deictic; reader engagement with; surface and depth of

theology, medieval: decline in; pagan philosophy within; rationalization of; relationship to Aristotelian science; relationship to natural philosophy; scientific passages in; vernacular; voluntarist. *See also* Christianity

Thomas Aquinas: on allegory; Aristotelianism of; on body; Book metaphor of; canonization of; on causality; commentary on *De anima*; commentary on *Physics*; compatibilism of; and condemnations of 1270s; creator-creation link of; on *dispositio*; on human nature; on inclination; on knowledge of God; on metaphysical study; on motion of rocks; on natural knowledge; on necessity; on parable; pluralized ethical world of; on reason; reconciliation of Greek natural philosophy; revival in fourteenth century; on sacraments; on *scientiae*; *Summa contra gentiles*, causes in; —on fatalism; *Summa theologiae*, on appetite; —Ax metaphor in; —inclination in; —motions of will in; —on natural love; —will in; synthesis of reason and Christianity; on transubstantiation; use of analogy; use of Aristotelian science; on will

Thomists: Aristotelian commentaries of; Tempier's opposition to

Thorpe, William

thought experiment; early modern view of

Thynne, Francis

Tiffany, Daniel

Tolkien, J. R. R.

transcendence: aesthetics of; analogy in; in Ax of Nature metaphor; in Book of Nature metaphor; in Ladder of Nature metaphor; and practice of reading; and reading of nature. *See also* nature, transcendent; Neoplatonism

transubstantiation: Aristotelian explanations of; Bonaventure on; debates over; in English sermons; Franciscans on; hylomorphic explanations of; post-1277 theories about; quantity and; Wyclif on. *See also* Eucharist

Trevisa, John; on death of Aristotle; on division; on enumeration; on "philosophie"; translations of; use of "philosophis"; vernacular audience of

Trinitarianism, Aristotle's reputed

Trinity: Book metaphor in; unified reality of

truth: Aristotelian knowledge and; senses' search for; *simpliciter*; *virtualiter*

Tuve, Rosemond; on Deguileville's allegory

Twomey, Michael

universities: encyclopedia use in; natural philosophy in; reception of Aristotle; science/religion debate; training of clerics. *See also* disputations

University of Paris: Aristotelian science at; prohibition of Ockham. *See also* arts faculty, Parisian

Unmoved Mover

Usk, Thomas; *Testament of Love*; tripartite definition of philosophy

via antiqua, versus *via moderna*

Vickers, Brian

La Vieille (*Roman de la Rose*); conflict with Genius; determinism of; on human exceptionalism; and misogyny; naturalism of

Vincent of Beauvais; *Speculum maius*; *Speculum naturale*

Virgin Birth

virtue: ethics of; personification of; of rocks; through early modern poetry; topology of

voice: politics of; Priscian on; subjectivity of

voids: impossibility of; possibilities for

volition, and natural order

voluntarism: academic debates over; and Chaucer's poetry; narrative; and the *Roman de la Rose*

voluntas. See will

Walsingham, Thomas

Watson, Nicholas

Wetherbee, Winthrop

Whitman, Jon

wilderness, Romantic metaphors of

will, divine: absolute freedom of; in Aristotelian teleology; centrality of; contingent nature of; in covenantal causality; forms contingent upon; and human will; nature's manifestation of; obedience of created world to; physical intermediaries of; relationship to human will; as source of necessity; time as instrument of; unknowability of; voluntarist view of

will, human; Aristotelian physics and; Augustinian model of; autonomous; Bonaventure on; compatibilist view of; in condemnations of 1277; contingency of; cosmos's indifference to; and covenantal language; divine influence on; and divine omnipotence; and divine will; external influences on; Franciscans on; inclination and; intellectualist; misuse of; movement of; natural motion of; necessity's restraints on; physics of; relationship to divine will; scholastic debates over; self-determination in; and sensory perception; teleological model of; terminology of; use of inward senses; use of reason; voluntarist view of. See also free will; voluntarism

William de Moerbeke

William of Alnick

William of Auvergne, on will

William of Conches; censure of; *Dragmaticon*; natural philosophy of

William of Ockham; on causation; challenges to Aristotelianism; Chaucer's response to; on Eucharist; on God's contingency; on God's power; on human nature; modern reception of; on natural philosophy; prohibition of; rejection of universals; on spiritual movement; *via moderna* of

William of St. Thierry, censure of William of Conches

Williams, Raymond

Wippel, John F.

The Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy

Wright, Steven

Wroth, Mary

Wyclif, John; Aristotelian science following; on Aristotle; debate with Strode; on Eucharist; Lollard followers of; natural reason following

Yamamoto, Dorothy

Zeeman, Nicolette

Zink, Michel

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dinshaw, Denis Flannery, Alexander Gabrovsky, Debra Hawhee, Jonathan Hope, Patricia Ingham, Stephanie A. V. G. Kamath, Sarah Kay, Peggy Knapp, John Monfasani, Jonathan Morton, Marco Nievergelt, Emily Steiner, Paul Strohm, Sarah Stanbury, and Ramie Targoff. This list is inadequate, but it must stand in for the many scholars whose generosity has made this a better book.

Special mention should be made of those who shared their expertise in medieval and modern philosophy. Dominik Perler read an early draft of the book proposal and did not laugh. Daniel Selcer and Graham Harman have reminded me over the years that now, just as in the Middle Ages, Aristotle means many things to many people.

One thing Aristotle tells us is that place is a marvelous thing, that there is no body that does not have its own proper *ubi*. This book expresses the local powers of many places, but three deserve special mention. A happy year spent at the National Humanities Center in Research Triangle, North Carolina, in 2011–12 was made even happier through the companionship of Fiona Somerset and Susanne Sreedhar. Madison, Wisconsin, brought me a group of friends and colleagues who were a constant source of intellectual stimulation and sustaining conviviality. This book is most directly the product of that environment and those people, especially Lisa H. Cooper, William J. Courtenay, Thomas Dale, Florence Hsia, Theresa Kelley, Rob Nixon, Michael H. Shank, and Karl Shoemaker. The lure of Madison was (and is) magnified by the presence of Guillermina De Ferrari, Sara Guyer, Alexandra Huneus, Ion Meyn, Mario Ortiz-Robles, and Scott Strauss. My current colleagues at the University of Maryland have warmly supported me as I finished this project. Theresa Coletti and Gerard Passannante deserve to be singled out for reading chapters and talking through questions of method. All of the graduate students in my “Imagining Nature” seminars in 2010 and 2013 encouraged me to think in new ways about what happens when we give nature a voice or, conversely, when we take it away; Danielle Allor and Rob Wakeman proved to be particularly effective provocateurs, for which I thank them.

Finally, I am grateful to the family that nature gave me—my father, the late Bob Robertson, my mother Martha, and my brother Keith—as well as to the one that I was lucky enough to find—all of the Witmores and my wonderful friends. The dedication records a singular debt, however, the one I owe to the two people with whom I have had the good fortune to create another green world.